Gay Lesbian Parents

# IN THE FAMILY

A MAGAZINE FOR LESBIANS, GAYS, BISEXUALS AND THEIR RELATIONS

## We're all in it together.

*Get the only therapy magazine devoted to lesbian, gay, and bisexual families*

**What do lesbian and gay parents need to know before they talk to their kids about sex?**
**How can gay and lesbian step-parents forge strong, loving bonds with stepchildren?**
**Why do some couples lose their sexual spark once they have or adopt children?**
**What is the psychological fallout for families when one parent has no legal rights or responsibilities toward the children?**

Love, intimacy and family are topics normally discussed only with close friends or in the privacy of the therapy room, but now you can read the magazine that tackles these topics in every issue! *IN THE FAMILY* is the *only* magazine that focuses exclusively on lesbian, gay and bisexual families, posing challenging questions and drawing on the wisdom of mental health experts who have been offering concrete advice and creative solutions to lesbians, gays, bisexuals and their families for years. Now, you can benefit from their experience and help your family thrive!

▼ ▼ ▼

*"The premiere issue is very promising, delivering compelling topics, strong writing, and crisp layout. You don't have to be lesbian, gay or bisexual to appreciate the thoughtful and important issues addressed... For all of us,* IN THE FAMILY *is an eye-opener, and hopefully a heart-opener, that will extend familiarity to all who value family."*
—**Utne Reader**

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Gay Lesbian Parents

Winter/Spring 1996 Issue

Newsletter of the
Gay and Lesbian Parents
Coalition International

# GLPCI Network

*Special Double Issue*

## Fight the Right March
**San Francisco, CA**
**April 14, 1996**

The Board of Directors of GLPCI voted to endorse the National Organization of Women's upcoming "Fight the Right March." We hope to bring together women, men and children from across the country to send a clear message to policy makers: "the majority of people denounce the divisive hate-mongering of the right-wing and will -- with our time, money, and votes -- actively support affirmative action, economic justice, abortion rights and reproductive freedom, civil rights for people of color, lesbian, gay and bisexual rights and efforts to end violence against women." At press time, COLAGE speakers are being considered for the rally stage.

The GLPCI Board also passed along this statement about the March's title:

"We, the GLPCI Board of Directors, recognize that groups organizing against democratic rights pose a serious threat to the lives and liberties of women and minority peoples in this country. It is critical that we all work together to provide information to give an accurate picture of our communities and to alert the general public to the dangers that we face. We look forward to the time when we will find the words to express our vision of a world *where conflicts between people can be resolved without the annihilation of one party or the other.*" ▼

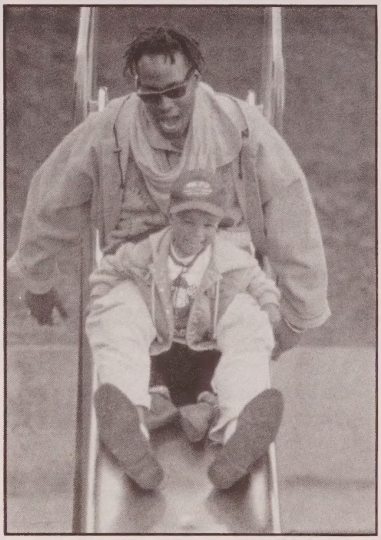
## Family Matters -- Guest Editorial by John D'Emilio, Director, The Policy Institute of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force

What is a family? According to opinion polls, a majority of Americans understand family as a group of people who love one another and take care of each other in good times and bad.

What is a family? In the hands of the radical Christian right, it has become a symbol and a weapon. A symbol of an imagined past when everything was just fine. A weapon that divides people into categories of good or bad, moral or immoral, productive citizen or irresponsible parasite. The allegedly "pro-family" rhetoric of the radical right is deeply homophobic and antifeminist, and exploits historically powerful racist stereotypes.

What is a family? For lesbians and gay men, family has become the frontier issue in our struggle for freedom, justice, and respect. Everywhere we look, family issues are surfacing--in the courts, in state

*(continued on page 2)*



Kerrington & Alexendre Osborne, San Francisco
from *Making Love Visible: In Celebration of Gay and Lesbian Families*, Photos by Geoff Manasse, Interviews by Jean Swallow -
- See Review on Page 3

## Good Advice for All Parents -- from Stefan Lynch, Director, COLAGE

A few words of sage advice from someone who grew up with a gay dad and lesbian mom, and has talked to and read about hundreds of kids with lesbian and gay parents:

1) **It's never too early to come out to your child.** Kids understand love. What they don't understand is deception or hiding.

2) **And it's never too late to come out to your child.** I know folks in their forties whose parents are just now coming out to them. A lot of mysteries are being solved, and missing puzzle pieces falling into place for these families, and it's a good thing.

3) **Kids go through stages.** You don't need me to tell you that. But when your teenager throws a fit when you want to bring your lover to a family function, remember...show them you love them and that your love is not contingent on their blind acceptance of your gayness. They'll accept you much more quickly with that basis of support.

And conversely, just cause you kid is doing fine now, doesn't see what the big deal is, etc. -- that doesn't mean you should do nothing. Introduce them to other kids with gay parents. They may hate each other, but years later they might be good and important friends (happened to me.) Make positive books available. Be open to talking, but don't push it. Don't make your love contingent on their ongoing acceptance.

4) **Your kids may be gay. They may be straight.** Either way, it's not a judgement on your parenting. Nor are they doomed to a life of loneliness and desperation and homophobia (if they are gay). Be as supportive of your kid's orientation as you wished your parents were of yours.

5) **Finally, particularly you Dads, talk about AIDS.** Even if you don't have HIV, your kids are thinking about it. Tell them how you are protecting/taking care of yourself. If you are positive, tell them. Please. ▼

### What are Your Dreams for Lesbian and Gay Parents and their Children?

You can make them come true by becoming a candidate for the GLPCI Board of Directors. GLPCI is looking for talented, hard-working and dedicated individuals to fill vacancies on its Board. Terms of office are for one or two years. Officers perform a variety of volunteer functions -- most importantly, raising money and setting policy for GLPCI. For more information, call John Nicoli, current GLPCI President, at (617) 273-1740. ▼

### "P" is for PARTY

Speaking of raising money... the GLPCI Board is conducting a major development campaign for Spring 1996. May is "GLPCI House Party Month." Invite your friends (tell them to bring their checkbooks), serve wine and cheese, show a video -- and ask them to support you, your family, and the work GLPCI is doing for all of us. For a complete how-to manual, call/fax (201) 783-6204 or e-mail: GLPCINat@ix.netcom.com. It's fun and it's a commitment to our future. Join us! ▼

### GLPCI *Image In Media* Award

Our *Image In Media* Award is presented annually at GLPCI's Family Conference to honor members of the media who have demonstrated or supported the positive influence gay and lesbian parents have on their children. Past recipients include authors April Martin and Amity Pierce Buxton, Phil Donahue, Oprah Winfrey and the Tracey Ullman Show. This year's suggested nominees include:

**Essence** Magazine; **The Birdcage** (United Artists motion picture); **Love Makes A Family** Talk Radio Show, Portland Oregon; **Making Love Visible**: In Celebration of Gay and Lesbian Families (book of photos and text); and **Sisters** (NBC Television).

We'd like to hear from you-- what are your ideas/feedback/suggestions? Call/fax us at (201) 783-6204. ▼

## Family Matters (continued from page 1)

legislatures, in workplaces, in the schools, in communities of faith, in the activities of our community centers and other organizations. Sometimes, picking up a copy of a gay newspaper, nothing but family issues of one sort or another seem to fill its pages.

It wasn't always so. When I was first coming out in the late sixties, as a college student influenced by the hippie counterculture and the first wave of radical feminist theory, "family" was something I could do without. It seemed that my only choices were to have a family, which meant my family of origin, or to be gay, which meant exile and escape from the constrictions of a heterosexist institution.

So why does family seem so important to us in the 1990s? Is the concern for family simply a defensive, reactive move on our part, a knee-jerk response to the "traditional family values" rhetoric of the Radical Christian Right? Or does the rise of family issues tell us something about how we have changed and what we want?

I think it's the latter. There are good reasons growing out of the history of our movement and communities that have pushed family issues to the front burner.

One has to do with the growing diversity of the public face of our movement and our community organizations. Lesbians, for instance, have often taken the lead in campaigns involving custody, adoption, and our right to be parents. Lesbians and gays of color have spoken and written passionately of the importance of strong, extended family ties for the survival of their home communities in the face of racism, and of their unwillingness to have to choose between family ties or their sexual identity. As gays and lesbians in smaller communities come out of the closet and organize for change, family is something just around the corner, not something to escape from.

Family issues challenge homophobia in new and important ways. One of the most destructive and persistent stereotypes used to perpetuate hatred against us and keep us isolated and separate is the claim that we are a danger to children. The gay man who molests children, or the lesbian teacher who corrupts her students, have been common cultural myths. As more and more parents come out of the closet and assert their right to keep their children, as more and more of us choose to have children even after coming out, we force the issue of queers and children in proactive ways.

Parents are becoming front-line activists in institutions that reach into the lives of most Americans. Take the public schools, for instance. As the children of openly gay or lesbian parents make their way through the public schools, these parents have to confront the insidious effects of homophobia in compelling ways. Will the schools, through their curriculum, be teaching these children to hate their parents? Will these children be the targets of ridicule, ostracism, and harassment? What must parents do to protect the integrity of their family relationships and to keep their children from harm? The actions they take--whether at parent-teacher conferences, at PTA meetings, or in one-on-one conversations with the parents of their children's friends, is the stuff of permanent grassroots social change.

Family issues matter. Whether it be the public rituals we create to celebrate our committed relationships or our decisions to have children in our lives, the articulation of a lesbian and gay "family politics" has the power to move our freedom struggle forward.

* * * * *

*Dr. D'Emilio is a leading historian on sexuality and the gay and lesbian movement in the United States. He is the author of* Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities *(1983);* Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America *(1988); and* Making Trouble: Essays on Gay History, Politics, and the University *(1992).*

*The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, 2320 17th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20009; (202) 332-6483* ▼

## *Making Love Visible: In Celebration of Gay and Lesbian Families*

Photos by Geoff Manasse, Interviews by Jean Swallow -- from The Crossing Press

Victor Gaitan & Roberto Garcia's Family

It started in 1991 early on a Saturday morning, when Seattle photographer Geoff Manasse snuck up the stairs in a friend's house to take a special picture. The resulting photo shows a little boy cuddling in bed with his two dads as they read *The Three Little Pigs*.

For Manasse, it was a cutting-edge image of family life and got him thinking about others he might be able to take. Two years later, he met the late author Jean Swallow. He wanted to make love visible; she would join him to give that love its voice. Within two weeks, they had planned the cross-country trip that would make the volume become a reality. More than 150 people are pictured in the book, in Manasse's unforgettable, intimate black-and-white portraits. All are originals, happily and defiantly describing themselves as a family.

We meet Champagne, a Portland, Oregon drag queen as she confronts Christian fundamentalists. We glimpse a family of six adults, raising a two-year-old boy while helping one of the family to die of AIDS -- at home where he belongs. We revisit the story of Sharon Kowalski and Karen Thompson, who fought for eight years for the right to care for her injured lover.

"Jean turned every interview into a soulful exchange," says Manasse of his collaborator. "She wanted the book to be a healing document." Ironically, before the project was over, Swallow, who suffered from depression, died of a deliberate aspirin overdose. Her eulogy is published at the book's end.

Gay and lesbian readers will be proud to find a little bit of home in *Making Love Visible.* Supporters will find insight; detractors will be educated. Everyone's heart will be warmed by the hospitality of these families and the loving attention of the team that created this record. ▼

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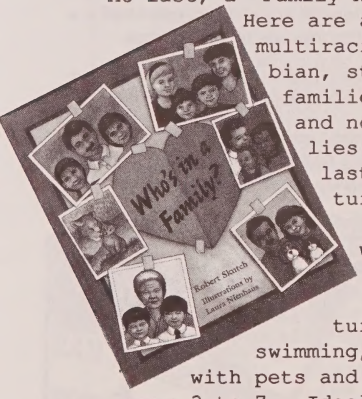
## *Who's in a Family?*

Written by Robert Skutch and Illustrated by Laura Nienhaus for Tricycle Press.




At last, a "Family Album" that includes everyone. Here are all different kinds of families: multiracial, multigenerational, gay, lesbian, straight, single parents, stepfamilies, families with only children and no children -- even animal families. And there's a place on the last page for you to paste in a picture of your very own family!

The author is a P-FLAG parent, who wrote the book for his lesbian daughter and grandson. The brightly colored, full-page pictures show families having fun -- swimming, sledding, making dinner, playing with pets and toys. Highly recommended for ages 3 to 7. Ideal for your child's school library.

We're selling this wonderful book as a GLPCI Fundraiser -- For your copy, send your name and address with a check for $17 to: "GLPCI"--Who's In A Family?, Box 43206, Montclair, NJ 07043 U.S.A. ▼

## NEW on the Bookshelf

Fiction:

*Mothers*, by Jax Peter Lowell (St. Martin's Press).

A gripping tale about a young boy raised in New York City by two lesbians during the late 60s and early 70s. After a homophobic incident, one mom wants to fight -- the other to hide.

*Safe As Houses*, by Alex Jeffers (Faber & Faber).

Two gay men raise their son and a nephew, while facing AIDS. Touching, surprising and compelling.

Non Fiction:

*From Wedded Wife to Lesbian Life: Stories of Transformation*, by Deborah Abbott and Ellen Farmer (The Crossing Press).

42 unique and diverse personal narratives, interviews and poems reveal eloquent stories of discovery and change.

*The Lesbian Parenting Book: A Guide to Creating Families and Raising Children*, by D. Merilee Clunis and G. Dorsey Green (Seal Press).

Drawing on the real life experiences of lesbian-headed families and the latest information from family specialists, the authors present detailed information on each stage of parenthood and child development.

*Lesbian Parenting: Living with Pride and Prejudice*, Edited by Katherine Arnup (Ragweed Press).

A perfect primer for lesbian parents, and a helpful resource for their families and friends. ▼

## *Gay Stepfamilies Needed!!!*

I am looking for participants for my study on the gay stepfamily system. I need both the biological parent and the stepparent in families in which the child(ren) resides with you for at least six months during the year. I am hoping to set up some interviews at the GLPCI conferece in July, but am also travelling to various states to complete the interviews. If you are willing to participate, please call Professor Jean Lynch -- collect -- at (513) 423-6816. Thank You!

## Did Pat Robertson Break the Ninth Commandment 1.4 Million Times?

*Church & State* Magazine reports that dues-paying Christian Coalition members are nearly 1.4 million fewer in number than claimed by the organization. The Coalition claims that its membership increased from 1.2 million in 1994 to 1.7 million in 1995. However, postal records reveal that paid membership actually fell from 353,703 in September 1994 to 310,296 in September 1995.

Not only is the Coalition lying -- which should be a major story in itself for a "Christian" organization -- but its support is weakening, which should also be a major political story.

"Pat Robertson's Christian Coalition has set a well-established pattern of deception in many of its activities," said Barry Lynn, Executive Director of Americans United for Separation of Church and State, publisher of the monthly magazine. "Wildly inflating its membership figures is just part of that deplorable practice." ▼

## Birds of A Feather

Now showing at a theater near you -- *The Birdcage*.

Directed by Mike Nichols, this exuberant Americanized remake of the late 70s French farce, *La Cage aux Folles*, stars Robin Williams as a Miami beach gay nightclub owner proudly married for decades to a hyper-emotional drag performer, played by Nathan Lane. The men pose as a conventional male-female couple to placate right-wing senator Gene Hackman, whose daughter hopes to marry Williams' son.

"I grew up in San Francisco, and knew many same-sex families," says Williams. "They raise their children the same way you do -- they love them. There are many kinds of family, not just the Norman Rockwell kind." ▼

## Family Friendly Libraries???

-- with contributions from the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation, National Coalition Against Censorship, and the American Library Association, Office for Intellectual Freedom

A group calling itself "Family Friendly Libraries" (FFL) is organizing a nationwide effort to repudiate the "Library Bill of Rights," a strong anti-censorship policy adopted by the American Library Association. FFL hopes to convince schools and libraries to adopt its own policy, which states that the purpose of a library is to emphasize the "superiority" of the traditional family, a "mother and father, married to each other, committed to a lifetime monogamous relationship." Following FFL guidelines, libraries would restrict access to any materials that do not promote these "family values."

Anti-homosexual bigotry provides much of the fuel for Family Friendly Libraries. The National Coalition Against Censorship (NCAC) reports that these "extremists have learned the utility of tapping into -- and deepening -- the existing reservoir of fear and resentment at the perceived success of the 'homosexual agenda.' Exploiting homophobia, they have learned, quickly polarizes communities and makes reasoned debate nearly impossible." One force behind FFL is Fairfax, Virginia housewife Karen Jo Gounaud, who has been leading a local fight to stop the free distribution of *The Washington Blade* in public libraries in her county. Gounaud, who has even contributed a column to *The Blade* expressing her moderate-sounding views, wants to offer her experience, tactics and insights to would-be censors around the U.S.

When censors like Gounaud and FFL are successful, NCAC says, "students learn that reading is dangerous, that adults do not trust young people, and that suppression is the way to respond to controversy." They also learn hatred and fear. Censors of homosexuality are, in effect, teachers of homophobia. When fair and factual information is suppressed, myths about sexual orientation thrive -- promoting substance abuse, suicide, guilt, isolation, increased risk of HIV infection, physical abuse, and a host of other tragic consequences.

While would-be censors argue that books about homosexuality are inappropriate for minors, it is school-aged children that commit most of the homophobic hate crimes reported annually. The silence in our schools and libraries cannot be separated from the violence in our streets. ▼

## CHARTER FOR A "FAMILY FRIENDLY" LIBRARY SYSTEM

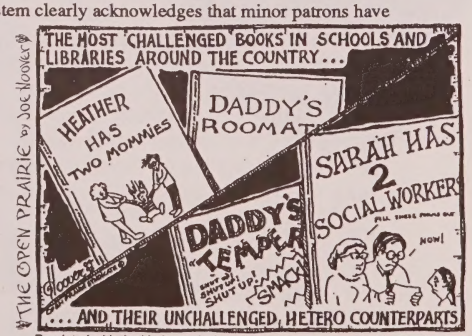
*Traditional Family Emphasis* -- The library system clearly acknowledges the importance and superiority of the traditional family -- mother and father married to each other, committed to a lifetime monogamous relationship and to caring responsibly together for their children.

*Parental Library Rights* -- The library system clearly acknowledges parents as having primary authority over the lives and activities, including reading activities, of their minor children.

*Respect for Standards and Laws* -- The library system clearly acknowledges "Community Standards" and statutory law, both local and state, as being relevant to the selection, display, and access policies concerning materials for the public library system.

*Respect for Minors* -- The library system clearly acknowledges that minor patrons have sensibilities and vulnerabilities different from that of adults and deserving of protection.

*Parent and Citizen Participation* -- The library system clearly acknowledges that regular communication with parents and other concerned citizens is a necessary and important part of maintaining a library that successfully serves the needs of families, and does not undermine their strength. ▼

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## NEWS for Our Families -- Custody and Visitation

### The #1 Reason Lesbian & Gay Americans Go to Court

In a decision which outraged parents of all sexual orientations, court watchers and the media nationwide, Circuit Judge Joseph Tarbuck of Pensacola, Florida determined that an 11-year-old girl would be better off in the custody of her father, John Ward -- a convicted felon who served time for murdering his first wife in 1974 in a dispute over custody issues -- than her mother, a lesbian in a committed relationship. The mother, Mary Ward, has asked the 1st District Court of Appeals to reverse Tarbuck's ruling.

Since the August ruling, an adult daughter from John Ward's first marriage has come forward with accusations of sexual abuse by her father throughout her childhood.

Lawyers for the mother say the case marks Florida's first chance for a ruling on whether sexual orientation can be a deciding factor in child custody cases. Supreme courts in eight other states have said a homosexual parent should not automatically be denied custody. Five others have ruled the opposite. The U.S. Supreme Court has never dealt with the question.

Sharon Bottoms and April Wade are again reeling after the latest decision of a Henrico County, Virginia juvenile court judge, and may give up the fight in the U.S.'s highest profile custody case ever.

In his February ruling, Judge William G. Boice didn't emphasize the couple's lesbian relationship when explaining why he was giving custody of 4-1/2-year-old Tyler Doustou to his maternal grandmother, Kay Bottoms. Instead, Judge William G. Boice pointed to a movie deal on the custody case that is to earn the couple $75,000 and 5 percent of any profit.

"I am less concerned with her lesbianism than Tyler being made a poster boy for a cause he could not and did not enlist," Boice said as he delivered his ruling. "I am appalled at the movie contract. [Sharon Bottoms] continues to put her interests above that of her child. For all her shortcomings, Kay does not."

About the ABC-TV movie deal (filming this spring with Valerie Bertinelli as Sharon and Vanessa Redgrave as Kay), attorneys for Sharon Bottoms said, "Folks badgered Sharon and April for a year and a half ... until they reluctantly agreed -- knowing a movie would be made anyway -- to cooperate with it, so that the story might be a more accurate one."

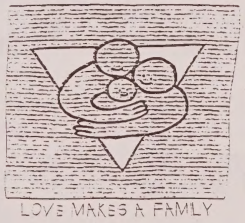
Boice's decision went against the recommendation of a lawyer appointed to represent Tyler, who conducted extensive interviews and home visits. This attorney delivered a stinging rebuke of Kay Bottoms' parenting skills. She said she was unwilling to discipline Tyler, and Tyler in turn has become dominating of adults and other children. She also noted that Tyler sleeps in the same bed with his grandmother, although he has his own room. Tyler's attorney was deeply concerned by the developmental delays she observed in Tyler. At 4-1/2, he doesn't know the alphabet, can't or

*(continued on page 13)*


**Wear it with Pride!**

**GLPCI T-Shirts, etc.**

***in Rainbow Colors***




**All items in vibrant multi-colors.**

Coffee Mugs:___ x $12 = $____
Mousepads:___ x $16 = $____
T-Shirts: Child S:___ x $15 = $____
Child M:___ x $15 = $____
Child L:___ x $15 = $____
Adult S:___ x $15 = $____
Adult M:___ x $15 = $____
Adult L:___ x $15 = $____
Adult XL:___ x $15 = $____
Adult XXL:___ x $17 = $____

***Add $5 Shipping...Total = $____***

*Send shipping address and check to "GLPCI," Box 43206, Montclair, NJ 07043*


## Love is in the Air-- GLPCI's Annual Family Conference

July 4th weekend will find several hundred GLPCI families and friends in beautiful Minneapolis, Minnesota for our 17th Annual Family Conference. Kevin Jennings, Executive Director of the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Teachers Network, will be a featured speaker.

The site -- the Regal Hotel in downtown Minneapolis located on the world famous Nicollet Mall. It's ideal for our families and those with special needs. For hotel reservations, call 1-800-522-8856.

Plan some extra time to enjoy the summer fun in the City of Lakes -- outdoor entertainment, the Minnesota Zoo, Children's Museum, Science Center, the Mall of America and Knott's Camp Snoopy!

For more information, contact our host chapter -- Minnesota Families -- at Box 11970, St. Paul, MN 55111 or call (612) 924-3049.

*See you there!* ▼

## How Should We Talk About "Religious Political Extremists"?

Some of us call them the *Extreme Right Wing* or the *Far Right*. I like to call them the *Radical Religious Right*, or the *RRR* -- pun intended.

But what should we call these people? What name will help us frame the debate on our terms?

According to focus groups conducted by Lake Research for the Human Rights Campaign, the term "Religious Right" has many positive associations, and may carry the message-- "the right to choose your own religion."

"Radical Right" has a strong negative association, but is most frequently associated with militias, skinheads and neo-Nazis, particularly since the Oklahoma City bombing.

The term "Religious Political Extremists," however, is strongly negative with every group of voters, including the most religious. ▼

## Everything Possible by Tim Fisher, GLPCI's Executive Director

On Valentine's Day, my three-year-old son, Fritz, came home from Nursery School with a slew of Valentine's in his lunch box. At the kitchen table, we opened them and read them together. At the bottom of the pile was a beautiful Pocohantas Valentine from Fritz's good friend, Erin. On the back, Erin, who's already writing simple sentences, had scrawled -- "Will you marry me?"

I thought this was adorable -- his first proposal. Fritz smiled, thought for a minute, and said, "When I grow up, I want to marry Erin -- or Zack."

Zack is an 11-year-old boy who comes over after school once or twice a week and babysits the kids while I'm upstairs working. He happened to be there that day, and heard what Fritz said. His response -- "Gee Fritz, that's nice!"

This little interchange put me in a sunny mood all day. I called Zack's house and told one of his moms the story. She laughed and said "And of course, you'll be writing this one up for your next newsletter."

I did pause for a moment though, before running to my keyboard. One of the myths about the children of gay and lesbian parents is that they're confused about their sexual identity. Does this vignette play right into that fear? Could this story be used against us?

No, I reminded myself -- Fritz is right! He's a lucky kid, because at only three, he knows the truth. Marriage is about love. He can grow up to marry Erin or Zack, or someone else. He can marry the person he loves -- no matter what their gender. And he may choose not to get married.

Fritz isn't confused -- he's well informed. He knows that there are all kinds of loving families. Living with two fathers, Fritz would be confused if he didn't realize that this was one of life's possibilities.

Sometimes there is one parent, sometimes two, and sometimes even more -- Fritz's good friend, Jordan, even has two moms and a dad all happily living under the same roof. And he knows couples, who don't have children -- Aunt Debs and Uncle Brian leap to mind -- and knows they're a family too.

By the time Fritz is ready to be married, his marriage will most likely be legally recognized -- whether he marries a woman or a man. His other father and I have to wait a short time longer for our marriage to be legally recognized -- we hope.

Of course, wise little Fritz has my blessing. When he grows up, he can marry Erin or Zack. They'd both make terrific in-laws. And in the meantime, we'll keep singing our favorite bedtime lullaby, *Everything Possible*, made famous by The Fabulous Flirtations:

*You can be anybody that you want to be*
*You can love whomever you will*
*You can travel any country where your heart leads*
*And know I will love you still*

*You can live by yourself*
*You can gather friends around*
*You can choose one special one*
*And the only measure of your words and your deeds*
*Will be the love you leave behind when you're gone*

*Some girls grow up strong and bold*
*Some boys are quiet and kind*
*Some race on ahead, some follow behind*
*Some grow in their own space and time*
*Some women love women*
*And some men love men*
*Some raise children and some never do*
*You can dream all the day never reaching the end*
*Of everything possible for you* ▼

freedom to marry

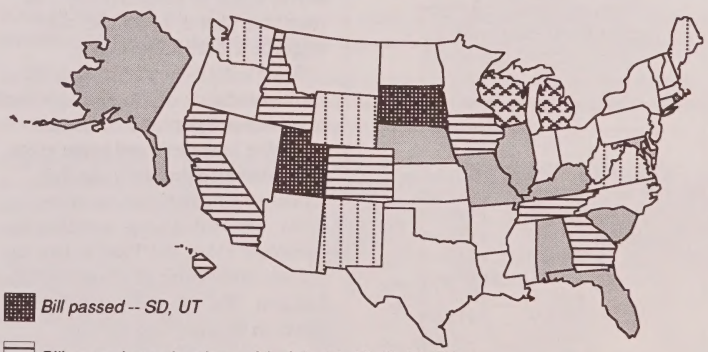
### Civil Marriage Benefits

Although many lesbian and gay couples are in long-term relationships, and undertake responsibilities toward one another just as married couples do, they are denied the hundreds of legal, economic, and practical benefits that married couples enjoy. Among these are the rights to:

- **Visit** a partner or child in the **hospital** and other public institutions
- Obtain such governmental benefits as **Social Security** and **Medicare**
- File joint **tax** returns and get special marriage or family rates or exemptions
- Obtain joint **insurance** policies for **home** and **auto**, as well as **family health** coverage
- **Inherit automatically** in the absence of a will
- Obtain **veterans' discounts** on medical care, education, and housing loans
- Enter jointly into **rental leases** with automatic renewal rights
- Automatically make **medical decisions** on a partner or child's behalf in the event of illness
- Choose a **final resting place** for a deceased partner
- Take **bereavement** or **sick leave** to care for partner or child
- Receive spousal exemptions to **property tax** increases upon the death of a partner

*(continued on page 7)*

**March 96** **Legislation to Ban Equal Marriage in 27 States**



*Bill passed -- SD, UT*

*Bill passed one chamber -- CA, CO, GA, HI, ID, IA, TN*

*Bill pending first floor vote -- AL, AK, FL, IL, KY, MD, MO, NE, RI, SC*

*Bill dead -- ME, NM, VA, WA, WV*

*Bill expected -- MI, WI*

## Unspeakable Unions? – The Flimsy Case Against Gay Marriage

**Excerpts from *Commentary* by Stephen Chapman, *The Chicago Tribune***

A specter is haunting conservatives: gay marriage....

Much of the opposition stems from religious objections. "We just believe it's plain immoral," said Tim Wildmon, vice president of the American Family Association. "It goes against the Holy Scriptures...."

The primary objection from Christian Action Network president Martin Mawyer is that if gays gain the right to wed, "marriage as an institution will be rendered meaningless." Society encourages marriage, he says, solely because "it is likely to produce a greater good, namely children, who are necessary for any society's existence."

But not everyone who gets married has children, and not everyone who has children gets married. We allow unions between people who don't want children and people who can't have children.

Marriage, conservatives argue, provides a vital framework for raising children. But gay couples also raise children--either children one of them has produced or children they have adopted. There is no law to stop a lesbian mother from bringing up her own son in a household that includes her female partner.

Robert Knight of the Family Research Council says homosexual conduct has to be discouraged to preserve traditional marriages, which are precious because "the stability they bring to a community benefits all." But allowing gay marriage would advance the same interest by discouraging promiscuity and encouraging commitment--the opposite of what current policy does. If it's good for society when straight couples settle down in permanent, legally sanctioned relationships, why is it bad when gay couples do likewise?

Because it would set a terrible precedent, according to Amherst College professor Hadley Arkes. Next thing you know, he warns, we'll have to allow marriage between men and boys, between fathers and daughters, even between multiple partners. Knight goes further, fearing that some men will want to marry dogs.

Here we have passed into outright hallucination....

These arguments serve mainly to obscure the issue, not illuminate it. Conservatives say they abhor gay marriage because they value marriage. The truth is they abhor gay marriage because they abhor gays. ▼

## Equal Marriage Attacks in 27 States

In the next year or two, as a result of an anticipated court decision, the state of Hawaii may issue marriage licenses to same-gender couples, which other states would have to recognize under current law.

But the religious policial extremists have mounted efforts in many states -- 27 at present -- to enact laws to prevent any such recognition. They are trying to shut down the discussion before our community can engage the public; our job is to keep it open and keep it advancing.

Already we've had some victories and some defeats. Randall Terry of Operation Rescue (the anti-abortion extremist) has announced he is going to Hawaii with "Gay Agenda" video maker Bill Horn and other right wing representatives to protest gay marriages. During caucus week in Iowa, all but one of the Republican presidential hopefuls attended (or sent supportive statements to) an anti-gay marriage rally.

Candidates Phil Gramm and Alan Keyes didn't get the irony in their opposition to equal marriage -- both have interracial marriages that would have been illegal in some U.S. states as recently as 1969.

On the plus side, numerous media reports, editorials and talk show programs have already addressed the unfairness of denying the freedom to marry to lesbians and gays. *The Economist* endorsed equal marriage rights in a cover story, the *Des Moines Register* opposes a local anti-marriage bill, former President Jimmy Carter has editorialized our case from a religious perspective, and *Oprah* and *Nightline* have positively covered the struggle. Public support for equal marriage has risen from about 25% in 1992 to almost 40% today.

To win and keep the freedom to marry, we must be prepared to focus on a long struggle. Please get involved with any of the groups in the National Freedom to Marry Coalition (GLPCI is a founding member) and its state-by-state partners.

Sign the Marriage Resolution, and ask others to do so. Write letters and articles for your local press. Join us! ▼

### Civil Marriage Benefits (continued)

- Obtain **wrongful death benefits** for a surviving partner and children
- Apply for **immigration** and residency for partners from other countries
- Have joint **parenting, adoption**, foster care, custody and visitation
- Obtain **domestic violence** protection orders

Most of these benefits cannot be privately arranged or contracted through other means, even for those who can afford a lawyer. Furthermore, private employers, banks, and other businesses often extend important benefits and privileges, such as special rates or memberships, to married couples only.

Denying equal marriage rights not only deprives same-gender couples of the social and emotional significance that marriage holds for many, it also deprives them of legal and economic benefits that can be essential to their livelihood. ▼

### *The Marriage Resolution*

Because marriage is a basic human right and an individual personal choice,

RESOLVED, the State should not interfere with same-gender couples who choose to marry and share fully and equally in the rights, responsibilities, and commitment of civil marriage.

**Resources for the Marriage Activist:**

- From Lambda Legal Defense, 212-995-8585, or e-mail EW LLDEF@aol.com -- talking points, sample testimony, press kits, marriage brochures and briefings in English and Spanish, legal summaries, etc.
- From the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, 202-332-6483, or e-mail bbarrett @ngltf.org -- "To Have and to Hold": A Marriage-Organizing Manual
- From the L.A. Gay and Lesbian Community Services Center, 213-860-7357, or e-mail PRCenter@aol.com -- an "Editorial Packet" for media activism ▼

## FIRST PERSON -- Dating and the Bisexual, Single Mom by Jane Fenario

The chances should be twice as good that I will have a date on a Saturday night because of the fact that I am open to dating women or men. Further, I am open to dating a person who is straight, bi or transgendered. Mathematically, that may create a larger pool of potential candidates, but in spite of my willingness to date across all categories, lately I haven't been out on any dates at all. I have infatuations now and then, but as a single mother to twin 6-year-olds, there's less time to pursue these crushes. My first priority is taking care of my kids. I'm not saying motherhood rules out the chances of dating, but I don't know any single mothers of young children who will tell you that it's easy doing both.

There's no question in my experience whether it is easier to come out to potential dates as bisexual, or to come out as a single mom. Early on -- pretty much as soon as I meet someone for whom I feel some attraction -- I let drop somewhere in the conversation that I have twins. After all, we're a package deal -- if someone doesn't have an interest in kids, they won't last long in my life. Coming out as bisexual is more complicated. My appearance wouldn't give me away; I fit neatly into any category so it's harder to be stereotyped as straight or lesbian. I have gone out dressed as a man in complete drag, with beard, and been handed the key to the Men's Room, and at other times I have dressed in a traditional feminine mode. I have a classic women's figure, especially one that has borne twins, but I've surprised people by my deep voice, tough stance. I am not straight, and also not androgynous; I can be manly or womanly, or both at the same time.

When I'm going out on a date with a woman who identifies as lesbian, it's always assumed by her and her friends that I, too, am a lesbian, until I mention that my last relationship was with a guy. All the straight men I've ever dated have assumed I'm straight until I mention I'm bi. I prefer being honest and up-front with people I am dating about my bisexual orientation because if my date doesn't like it, that's an excellent indicator that we're not going to be developing the relationship.

It's a hassle always to be coming out, no matter who I'm dating. Here's a good example of the inner dialogue that bounces around in my head when I'm interested in asking someone new on a date. I have had a crush on a male acquaintance and recently have asked him out in a casual way. He's had valid reasons for not being able to go -- had a business trip scheduled, had tickets to a soccer match -- so I didn't take his "No, thanks" as a personal rejection. In fact, I'm fairly certain he doesn't even realize I am attracted to him. He may assume I am a lesbian because he knows of the last woman I dated. When I ask him out, he probably is thinking I mean it in the "just friends" category, not as a romantic date. This is a problem. On the other hand, he knows that I'm a mother and so far hasn't joked about turkey basters or anything, so maybe he's caught on that I've had men in my life, too. But since he's never asked and I haven't had a smooth opening to bring it up, I don't actually know what he assumes about how I conceived my children. We have a sweet friendship, and in this context I've been getting to know him better and am enjoying his company, but how will I work the fact that I am bi into the conversation? Will he pull back when he realizes I'm interested? A simple thing like "I like you, let's go out on a date" becomes a confused tangle of missed signals, misinterpretations and faulty assumptions.

> " I'm not saying motherhood rules out the chances of dating, but I don't know any single mothers of young children who will tell you that it's easy doing both. "

There's an assumption I keep running across that as soon as I find a long-term partner, I will see my bisexuality as a phase and conclude that I have found my "true" sexual orientation (which one it is will depend on the gender of my partner, naturally). A relative recently told me, "You'll have to make up your mind some time!" I resent several things about this assertion. One, is that a monogamous partnership is my ultimate goal, and another is that I can't simply be who I am: a person who likes both men and women, and always will like both men and women, regardless of what kind of relationship I am in. This doesn't mean I'll always sleep with both men and women if I do decide on a monogamous relationship, but it means the potential for attraction will still be there. Why is this concept so hard for non-bisexuals to deal with, when surely it is the same for, say, a lesbian who is in a committed relationship? Has she really ceased feeling any attraction to other women just because she has a partner and they hyphenated their names?

Monogamy is still a question for me. I know I want a primary partnership, but I'm not sure I would automatically rule out sexual relationships on the side. Even as I write this, I realize that these ideas are more workable on the level of fantasy than reality because the bigamous relationships I have been in have been very unclear. I was in a long-term relationship with a bisexual couple, and that's still how I think about it: I was in a relationship with them, not all of us in a relationship with all of us. It began spontaneously -- I befriended him and then met his girlfriend and

was smitten, but assumed she was heterosexual (yes, bisexuals are prone to making the same faulty assumptions about other people). Anyway, I flirted lightly and was shocked when she flirted back. I became involved with both of them at the same time. Because they already lived together, when we went out in public or spent time with their friends, it was assumed that I was their friend, nothing more. The world doesn't acknowledge three people as having a romantic relationship. No one who saw us out on a romantic date would ever think of us that way because "three's a crowd," right? Any public displays of affection appeared to be a joke to anyone watching, including when we had a group kiss on the street. We looked like a happy bunch of affectionate friends. It was a strange invisibility. We were being outrageous, but no one saw it. We lasted a few months as a romantic entity, and a few years as sexual friends. I have written love notes to that couple. I know this sounds complicated to those who haven't been through it, but I like to say, "Labels are for food, not people."

I brought my last partner, a lesbian, to our family Christmas party. I figured my relatives would assume she was just a friend -- only my sister knew I was bisexual -- but later that week my sister got drunk and outed me to them as a lesbian, which I'm not. My family has not spoken about it with me, but my father and siblings continue to be an active part of my life. My dad does a lot of babysitting for the kids. After seeing one of my performance pieces, one brother said I probably just wasn't able to find a good man. He also told me, "I worry about these people you're hanging out with," and then, "I just hope it's really who you are." I told him, "It is." I found this interchange strained, and I really believe he thinks I was "corrupted" by the other woman. And a few days ago, I was with my father in the car and we saw a couple making out -- I assumed they were straight but it turned out to be two women. "Well, that's cool, I guess," he said.

It would probably be easier for my kids if I ended up with a man and looked, to the world, like a heterosexual woman. Because my kids are so young, I haven't sat down with them to explain something as complicated as sexual orientation, but recently my daughter has been learning terms like "in love with" and "crush" from other kids at school. The other day, when we were alone and relaxed, I told her that the last woman I had dated, Suzie, and I had been in love. We were together for an intense nine months, during which she spent a lot of time with my kids, who became very fond of her. At this announcement, my child giggled. I waited to see if she would have questions. Then she said, "Yeah," and that was it.

> "In the frazzled reality of raising two kids on my own, I was needy in the romance department and I was drawn to her immediate connection to my kids. What mother isn't?"

I wonder how my kids think about that relationship. I hate to stereotype, but Suzie, a lesbian, did start talking about moving in after only one date. In her pre-lesbian life, she had been married and had two children, who are nearly grown, and she was very attracted to becoming a coparent to my kids. In the frazzled reality of raising two kids on my own, I was needy in the romance department and I was drawn to her immediate connection to my kids -- what mother isn't? My kids loved her and after only one month, she was strongly pushing her proposal to move in. I put the breaks on and looked at the situation. There were lots of areas in the relationship where we weren't compatible and didn't communicate well, and I certainly wasn't ready to make a serious commitment like living together. When you have kids, you can't invite someone into your life lightly. Kids grow attached, and then breaking up -- if that becomes necessary -- is so much more complicated and painful for them.

My ideal partner would be as open-minded as myself, creative, cooperative and whole, even if "in process" -- not an incomplete "second half" looking for its mate to be complete. On a date with a man, I like pulling the chair out for him, opening the door, paying the tab. On a date with a woman, I like fluid roles, where we can flip back and forth from butch to femme. I don't know what the perfect date would be like, but I'm always up for an adventure. ▼

**The author is a multimedia artist who doesn't know what she wants to be when she grows up -- besides honest. Thank you, Jane, for sharing your story. Readers, if your family would like to be profiled in this space -- please contact the Editor.**

**This article was first published by *In the Family: A Magazine for Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals and their Relations*, and is reprinted here with permission. To subscribe to *In the Family*, send $22 to ITF, Box 5387, Takoma Park, MD 20913, or call (301) 270-4771 for more information. Subscriptions outside the U.S. are $26.**

**BISEXUAL RESOURCE GUIDE** ▼

*Robyn Ochs, editor*

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## Camp Common Ground

### *A Granola Eatin', Cotton Wearin', Mud Lovin', Kid Adorin', Fun Time!*

Kids and grownups of all ages will have a unique place to pay and work together this summer in Vermont. Campers can be single, married or unmarried or same sex couples, children, roommates, friends and grandparents.

Located at Camp Hochelga on Lake Champlain in South Hero, Vermont (north of Burlington), the camp will run for three one-week sessions from August 11th to 31st this summer. Now in its third year, plans call for expansion to a year-round program.

Camp Common Ground offers traditional recreational activities: canoeing, sailing, tennis, soccer, baseball, music and more. Some unusual offerings include Tai Chi, yoga, African and Latin dance, in-depth discussion groups, outdoor adventure, Conga drumming, playwriting, poetry, puppet-making, juggling and gymnastics. The environment is nurturing and non-competitive.

The camp, a non-profit venture, is run cooperatively. All campers, regardless of age, are invited to sign up for a work slot -- ranging from helping in the vegetarian kitchen, leading a nature walk, organizing a baseball game or telling a story. Campers can buy or barter for membership, which will entitle them to a voice in how the camp is managed and the programs offered in future years.

For more information, see the advertisement below. ▼

## Summer Fun!

Making plans for your summer vacation? Check out these camps which welcome our families. GLPCI does not endorse these particular ventures, but presents this information as a service to its membership. If you know of any other camps catering to our community of parents and children, please contact GLPCI.

Uncommon Fun for Grown-ups and Kids -- photo courtesy of Camp Common Ground

Camp It Up!'s Popular Swimmin' Hole- photo courtesy of Camp It Up!

## Camp It Up! -- *A Summer Celebration*

Campers of all ages will enjoy the beauty and protected environment of Berkeley Tuolumne Camp, just a short drive from Yosemite, California, for three days to two weeks -- from August 19th to September 1st.

Now in its 7th year, Camp It Up! provides every opportunity for each member of the family, from infants to grandparents, to relax and have lots of fun. The diverse camp community includes lesbian/gay, single parent, multi-racial and traditional families and friends.

Counselor-led groups for children ages 1 to 11 are offered each day, as well as a variety of crafts, music, sports and drama activities led by program specialists. A teen program is offered each week for 12 to 14 year-olds, as well as a Counselor-in-Training program for older teens.

Some of Camp It Up!'s new and unusual activities include: a family fishing clinic, a teen "vision quest," a scrabble tournament, treasure hunts, star-gazing, breakfast and night hikes, and sweat-lodge saunas.

Camp It Up! is a cooperative program in order to provide an extensive children's program and still keep the camp affordable. For more information, write Camp It Up!, 4000 Waterhouse Road, Oakland, CA 94602 or call (510) 530-0107 for a free brochure. ▼

## Mountain Meadow Summer Camp
## *"I Miss Getting 100 Hugs a Day"*
### *First Person Account by Rachel Milenbach*

The kids' community with a feminist conscience-
photo courtesy of Mountain Meadow

For the third year in a row, I was privileged to live, work and play at a very special summer camp. Mountain Meadow Summer Camp is a two week feminist overnight camp for children from many types of families, including: children of single parents; of lesbian, gay, transgendered and heterosexual families; and of biracial and bicultural families. This year's camp took place on a beautiful site in Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania (about 30 miles from Philadelphia).

This year's staff was just amazing. In order to be hired, our new staff had to meet one basic criterion -- to love kids. Since Mountain Meadow is about loving and respecting young people (and ourselves), we figured other staff skills such as the ability to cook and run activities were secondary.

At Mountain Meadow, we did a lot of the usual camp activities and made up some unique ones too. We held daily "kids meetings" where campers met to discuss whatever was on their minds, and "choice" activities where they had the opportunity to offer to the group any activity of their choosing. We wrote, produced and filmed a video about youth and tobacco. We had a camp-wide pillow fight, played cooperative games, and shared responsibility for cooking all of our meals.

Our most memorable times were probably the ones we planned on the spur of the moment. One night the staff surprised the kids at bed time with a wild disco dance/ice cream/water fight party. Another night we cooked a delicious Thanksgiving dinner just because we thought it would be fun!

When I return, adjusting to the real world again is always interesting. Although my life is full, I keep having the feeling that something is missing. While sharing photographs of Mountain Meadow with a friend, the answer came to me. I miss getting 100 hugs a day, cuddling with my tentmates, laughing hysterically just because it feels good, being with kids all day. I miss the special community we created.

Mountain Meadow is a feminist overnight summer camp for girls and boys, ages 8 to 14. In 1996, one and two week sessions are planned for August 18th to 31st. Camp is organized during the year by a volunteer collective based in Philadelphia. Tuition is based on a sliding scale to reach young people of all economic classes. For more information, write: Mountain Meadow Summer Camp, 35 West Mt. Airy Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19119, or call (215) 242-3037. Rachel's article (edited for length) first appeared in *Labyrinth: The Philadelphia Women's Newspaper* (Oct. 1995). ▼

## Camping Out -- by Michelle Kathleen Hamilton

In 1993, Peg Lahn and I were asked as lesbians and peer educators to recommend a recreation program that would be open and positive for a 12-year-old boy who was physically threatened when his summer camp counselor found out he had been exploring his sexuality with another male camper. We could offer no viable options. When we consulted other Canadian organizations supporting youth dealing with issues of sexual orientation, we found that they simply couldn't provide recreational programs, so Camping Out was conceived.

Camping Out is an unique interactive adventure-based program for youth who are not heterosexual, and friends or children of gays and lesbians who are looking for an alternative to traditional camping experiences. The Camping Out program promotes confidence in sexual identity, community connections, and informed life decisions among youth confronting issues of sexual orientation.

The Camping Out experience begins with a 12-day group adventure into North-ern Ontario. While we camp, canoe, hike and rock climb our way along an ancient canoe route, the programming moves through workshops and relevant discussions on conflict resolution, creative problem solving, trust, relationships, sexual identity, health and wellness, wilderness living, eco-management and first aid.

Camping Out is group directed and runs sessions throughout the summer based on demand, with trips designed for group interest and need. The Camping Out experience continues throughout the year with follow-up events and weekends including ropes courses and winter camping.

The program, affiliated with the Toronto chapter of P-FLAG, is specifically directed -- but not limited -- to 14 to 19 year-olds. We are committed to a sliding scale fee structure in order to insure accessibility and inclusion. Group-initiated community service work during the follow-up season is integral to program ownership and is designed to develop community connections and participation.

For more information, write Camping Out Centre for Learning, 401 Richmond Street, West, Suite B174, Toronto, Ontario M5V 3A8 CANADA; or call (416) 340-7476. ▼

"Nobody can make you feel inferior without your consent."
-- Humanitarian and lesbian mom Eleanor Roosevelt

### Internet Resources for Parents and Kids

**Gay/Lesbian Parenting Chat** on America On-Line -- Currrent Schedule: WED 12-1 a.m. EST; SUN 9-10 p.m. EST
Go To Keyword: GLCF Events, and click on Support Group Icon

**Info on COLAGE** from KidsOfGays@aol.com

**GLPCI Home Page:** http://www.qrd.org/QRD/www/orgs/glpci/HOME.HTM

**Gay Dads Home Page:** http://userwww.service.emory.edu/~librpj/gaydads.html

**To join the GAYDADS, KIDSOFGAYS or QUEER-PARENTS lists:**
1. E-mail majordomo@vector.casti.com
2. No subject line, on text line type...
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ex. subscribe KIDSOFGAYS John Doe <GLPCI@aol.com>

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1. E-mail majordomo@qiclab.scn.rain.com
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**To join the Straight Spouse list:**
1. E-mail majordomo@texsys.com
2. No subject line, on text line type...
3. subscribe spouse-support

### Internet Support for GLPCI Parent Groups

GLPCI is developing a new list on the Internet -- one where members of local parent support groups can share ideas and inspiration. Share a story of a successful activity for the kids.... Want to complain about lack of participation? Talk to a group that understands.... Hosting a mini-conference? Ask what others have done.... Share fundraising ideas and more. The list will debut this summer. For more detials, give our resident Internet expert, Jim Fagelson (see below), a call.

**Questions?**, contact Jim Fagelson at: GLPCINat@ix.netcom.com ▼

### "An important message for all Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered parents and their children"...brought to you by

Announcing... a new e-mail list for daughters and sons of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender parents! Kids, teens, adults -- Tell your own stories. Ask questions. Use your experience to help others. Make new friends.

**Why?** To talk about AIDS, teasing, our gay and straight parents, our feelings, school, and much more. This list is a place to talk about all the things we can't talk about anywhere else.

**Who?** The list is open to anyone who is a daughter or son of lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgendered parents, including people with gay foster parents or other guardians. It's for people whose parents are just coming out, and those whose parents were out before they were born.

**How?** To subscribe to the list, see the instructions at left. The list is moderated by Mike Greer, the adult son of a lesbian mom. No parents will participate in the list unless they have gay parents themselves. Kids may use their parent's email address, but we ask that parents refrain from reading or contributing to the list.

**Questions?** You can send them to kidsofgays-owner@vector.casti.com.

Special thanks to Moderator Mike Greer, Executive List-Mistress: Dorsie Hathaway (dorsieh@vector.casti.com) and our Server, David Casti and Casti.com ▼

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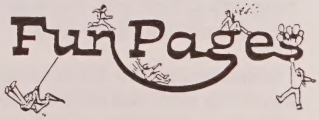
### Introducing...Denise Connett

After a truly rigorous and very difficult hiring process with so many outstanding candidates, we are pleased to announce that Denise Connett will join COLAGE in the position of Assistant Director. Denise, the daughter of a gay father, is GLPCI's first paid professional employee. She comes to our San Francisco office from Boston where she's been an integral part of the team that has made Bean Town our strongest COLAGE chapter. With kids and adult groups, media savvy, a touring play about teens with L/G/B/T parents, letter writing campaigns and more, COLAGE-Boston has lead the way in supporting and advocating for our families. Denise has also served on the COLAGE Steering Committee as this year's Conference Coordinator.

"COLAGE is really starting to grow," says Denise, "and I'm excited to have the opportunity to do proactive work on behalf of our families." Welcome Denise! ▼




For your kids, ages 6-12. Coming soon, an 11-year-old interviews his hero, Greg Louganis.

To subscribe, write: COLAGE, 2300 Market Street, Box 165, San Francisco, CA 94114; (415) 861-KIDS.

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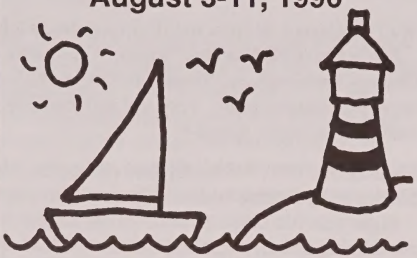
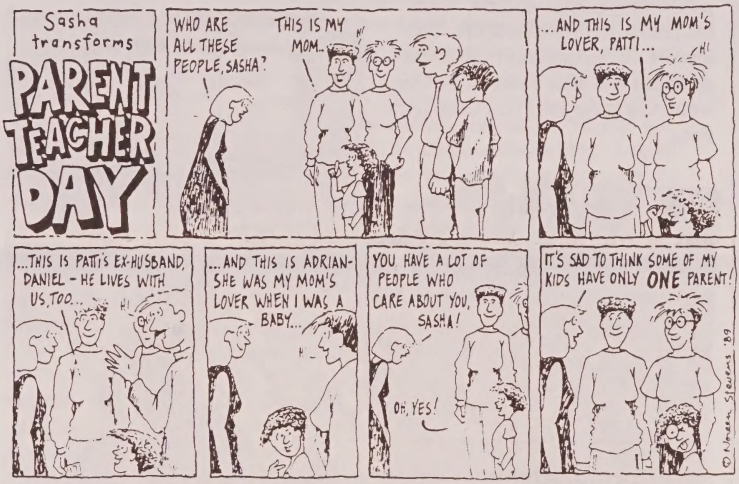


**Gay and Lesbian Family Week**
***in Provincetown, Massachusetts***

**Sponsored by GLPCI**
**For more info, call 202-583-8029**

THE CHOSEN FAMILY

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## NEWS for Our Families (continued from page 5)

won't count past three, and has trouble identifying colors.

Judge Boice's decision also declined to punish Kay Bottoms for frequently denying court-ordered visitation between her daughter and grandson. Kay Bottoms withheld visitation about 25 percent of the time, Tyler's attorney estimated.

Sharon's attorneys said immediately after the hearing that they would appeal the ruling to the circuit court. But Sharon Bottoms wasn't so sure. According to her partner April Wade, she's trying "to decide if she wants to go through this."

January brought good news to lesbian moms Donna Madsen and Shirley Edwards of Lexington, **North Carolina**. Edwards' mother, who accused them of sexually abusing Edwards' daughter back in 1994 in a bid for custody, finally dropped the charges. • The **Utah** Supreme Court granted primary custody of a 7-year-old girl to her father instead of her lesbian mother. But the high court specifically stated that the case did not hinge on the sexual orientation of the parents. • In December, the **Wyoming** Supreme Court placed limits on a lesbian mother's visitation with her children. But the main reason, said the court, was not her sexual orientation, but "the vicious clash of lifestyles" between the mother and her female companion and the former husband and his fundamentalist Christian wife. ACLU attorneys who cooperated on the case term the decision a loss, but say its key impact will be positive. ▼

## Gay and Lesbian Family Week in Provincetown, Mass. August 3 - 11, 1996

GLPCI has declared the first week in August to be "Gay and Lesbian Family Week." The event will begin on Saturday, August 3rd and run until Sunday, August 11th, 1996.

"Lesbian and Gay parents from all over the country are always on the lookout for gay-friendly — and kid-friendly — spots to vacation," says Tim Fisher, GLPCI's Executive Director. "Provincetown fits this description to a tee."

"Our 'Family Week' is about meeting people, building sandcastles at the beach, sharing a babysitter, and going whale watching, bike riding or out to eat with newfound friends," continues Fisher. "Part of GLPCI's Mission is to sponsor Family Get-togethers to share, learn and celebrate that *Love makes a Family!*"

There is no fee charged by GLPCI and no long list of planned events and activities. GLPCI will host a barbecue and provide an information sheet at the Provincetown Chamber of Commerce Building in August listing a few suggested activities and times when families can enjoy them together.

Families should secure their own accommodations. One source to call is In-Town Reservations at 1-800-67P-TOWN. But do it soon! — August is the peak season and available lodgings will disappear fast.

GLPCI plans for Family Week to become an annual event in Provincetown. "We'd like to see other resorts plan activities like these for the rapidly-expanding market of gay and lesbian-headed families," urges Fisher. "How about a Ski Week in the Rockies or a Tropical Cruise? Our families crave opportunities to socialize with other families like ours — to help counter the discrimination and bigotry we sometimes face at home and in school."

Anyone with ideas for additional Family Get-togethers is encouraged to contact GLPCI. *See you at Herring Cove Beach!* ▼

## Update on Second-Parent Adoption

Second-parent adoption, where the same-sex partner of a parent becomes a second legal parent to the child, remains in the news.

The troublesome D.C. Appropriations Bill has not yet been enacted by the U.S. Senate. But the current version, which finally cleared the U.S. House, allows these protections for our children to continue.

Here's a complete list of locations where these adoptions have been granted (*= Statewide precedent):

Alaska
California
Colorado
District of Columbia*
Illinois*
Indiana
Iowa
Massachusetts*
Michigan
Minnesota
Nevada
New Jersey*
New York*
Ohio
Oregon
Pennsylvania
Rhode Island
Texas
Vermont*
Washington
Outside USA:
Ontario, Canada
Manchester, England

First Cases Pending: Idaho, Maryland; the Netherlands

If you know of other jurisdictions where second-parent adoptions have been filed, please call GLPCI. ▼

## NEW on the Shelf -- Picture Books for Our Children

*My Two Uncles*, Written and Illustrated by Judith Vigna (Albert Whitman).

Elly's Uncle Ned and his "friend," Uncle Phil, make a wonderful gift for Gran and Grampy's anniversary. Trouble is, Uncle Phil's not invited to the party, and for once, Ned refuses to go. Very real and touching, with the beginning of a happy ending. Full color, ages 6-9

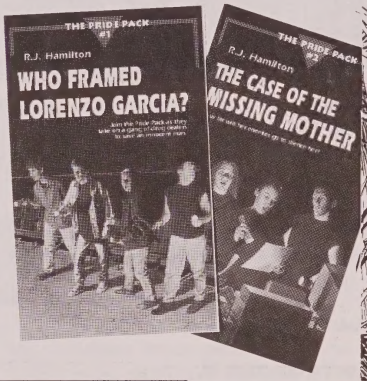
*My Dad Has HIV*, Written by Earl Alexander, Sheila Rudin and Pam Sejkora; Illustrated by Ronnie Walter Shipman (Fairview Press).

Eight-year-old Lindsey comes to understand and confront a complicated and challenging disease. Her honest fears -- What will people think? Will my father die? -- and her love for her father combine in this hopeful story that simply and scientifically explains the facts about HIV/AIDS for children. Full color, ages 4-8.

## For Teens

*Who Framed Lorenzo Garcia?* and *The Case of the Missing Mother*, from *The Pride Pack* series, Nos. 1 & 2, by R.J. Hamilton (Alyson Publications).

A group of teens -- some gay, some with gay parents -- rely on each other in a series of mystery adventures. Each has unique and valuable skills. The idea for this series came from discussions that publisher Sasha Alyson had with teens at the 1993 GLPCI convention. ▼



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*a project of Lesbian and Gay Parents Association ©1994*
For video and workshop materials, send $25 (individuals) or $50 (institutions), to:
GLPCI, Box 43206, Montclair, NJ 07043.


## Lesbian Mother & Superhero = Redundant

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## MORE NEWS from Around the World

In February, a New South Wales, **Australia** Supreme Court Judge ruled that a lesbian pay her former lover a $113,000 lump sum for support of two children the couple conceived via alternative insemination. "It is unconscionable for the defendant now to seek to make no contribution whatsoever to the upbringing of these children," ruled the Judge, noting that the woman had led her partner to believe they would raise the children together. • In Ontario, **Canada**, the Family Law Act has been rewritten so that its alimony and child-support provisions apply to same-sex couples. Support obligations will arise when a couple has lived together for at least three years or the relationship has developed "some permanence" and resulted in children. An Ontario Court General Division Justice said the act was unconstitutional in excluding gay couples from its definition of "spouse." • Lesbians in **the Netherlands** could win the right to adopt a lover's biological children (second-parent adoptions) if a current legal battle by Test Case Duo-Motherhood is successful. The women promise to fight all the way to the European Court of Justice if necessary. At present, relatives can remove children from a lesbian household if their biological mother dies.

The **Vermont** legislature completed a revision of the state's adoption code in January, voting 22-7 against an amendment which would have banned unmarried couples, gays and lesbians from adopting. Lesbian and gay parents in several neighboring states successfully countered pressure from certain religious leaders working to enact the ban. • In **Ohio** this January -- same vote, same victory! • In Sparta, **New Jersey**, a straight spouse has sued her minister for "outing" her. A church choirmaster, who divorced his wife for another man in 1992, stopped bringing his partner to church because it upset his teenage son. But when the couple showed up together at a 1994 Christmas service, the Reverend John Nieman gave his approval in a sermon. A year later, he's in court defending his actions.

In December, U.S. Rep. Enid Waldholtz, R-**Utah**, suggested that her husband, Joe Waldholtz, should be denied custody and visitation of their infant daughter because of his "questionable lifestyle choices" and evidence of homosexual pornography. The ultra-conservative Waldholtz, once a favorite of House Speaker Newt Gingrich, is under Federal investigation for irregularities totaling $1.7 million which benefited her 1994 political campaign. She says that her husband, who at one time fled from prosecutors, is solely responsible for the misdealings and that she knew nothing about them. "The Representative is trying to use gay-baiting to deflect attention from her political and financial trouble by questioning her husband's sexuality." said a statement from the Gay and Lesbian Utah Democrats. "We hope that the divorce court looks beyond her attempt to confuse the simple issue of deciding what is best for the child." ▼

## Student Internships Available:

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## Research Projects:

### A Look into Co-Mothering

A Researcher wants to explore the everyday experiences of non-biological lesbian co-mothers whose children have been conceived by alternative insemination -- how the children were conceived; parenting stories that pertain to feelings of isolation, invisibility and discrimination; their relations with social institutions like schools, medical facilities or work place; and their families of origin. Contact:

Garth Greatheart
University of Victoria
School of Social Work
Victoria, BC C8W 3P2 CANADA
E-mail: garthg@UVic.CA

### Wanted: Moms & More Moms

Lesbian moms, co-moms, step-moms -- all wanted for a confidential nationwide descriptive survey regarding lesbian motherhood as part of a doctoral dissertation. Contact:

Julie Steeno, LCSW, ABD
Director, Family Diversity Center
1501 Venera Avenue, Suite 212
Coral Gables, FL 33146
(305) 662-5000; Fax: (305) 669-9726
E-mail: FAMILYSTDY@aol.com ▼

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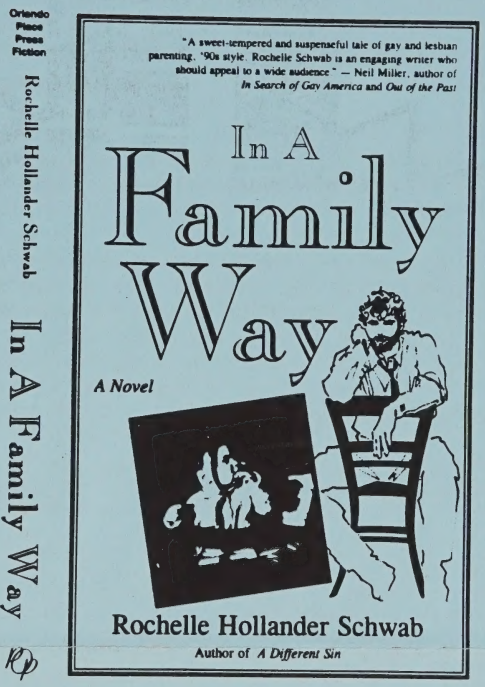


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*"...a dramatic story, well told, presenting homosexuality in an intensely human way. Rochelle Schwab calls out of her readers a higher consciousness and a deeper humanity while forcing prejudice and ignorance into retreat." -- Bishop John Shelby Spong, author of Rescuing the Bible from Fundamentalism*

*"A well-researched, well written, fiery historical gay novel...The sex is erotic and tasteful. The seduction scene with Walt Whitman poetry melted me...All in all, an excellent novel." -- John Starr, OUT in Virginia*

*"Schwab's depiction of war's horrors has the ring of truth...Civil War enthusiasts will find much that is diverting in A Different Sin." -- Alexandria Gazette-Packet*

*****

An Alexandria resident, Rochelle (Shelly) Schwab is the mother of a lesbian daughter, and is active in the Metropolitan Washington chapter of PFLAG (Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays). Her earlier gay-themed novel, *A Different Sin*, is now also available from Orlando Place Press.

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Spring 1994 Issue

Newsletter of the
Gay and Lesbian Parents
Coalition International

Providing Support
and Information
Services for Parents
Around the World

*Quotes:*

*"When we decided that we were going to have kids, we decided that we would need a family name. Having a family name is one way to show the world that we are as deserving of first-class citizenship as any non-gay married couple." — Rod Jackson-Paris, international model and co-author (with life-partner Bob Jackson-Paris, a former Mr. Universe) of Straight from the Heart: A Love Story*

*"These books are not about sex, they're about families. And in the first grade, that's what children are talking about. For a little kid to not be able to talk about her family is a crime." — Lesléa Newman, author of Heather Has Two Mommies*

*"There are those who clamour for more prisons to lock up young offenders. My answer is we need more good parents. It doesn't matter if it's a single parent, a gay, lesbian, rich or poor — as long as the parent takes care of the children." — Montreal, Quebec's Chief of Police, Jacques Duchesneau*

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# GLPCI Network

## *Our Families Under Attack Around the Globe!*

### Proposed Ballot Initiative in Washington State Would Tear Our Families Apart

On Monday, January 10th, two anti-gay initiatives were filed with the Washington secretary of state, setting off petition drives to get the measures on the November 1994 ballot. One of the two measures, filed by the Citizens Alliance of Washington, targets lesbian and gay parents and their families with unprecedented vigor — prohibiting gays and lesbians from becoming foster parents, adopting children, or gaining child custody in a divorce. This measure also bars "minority status based on homosexuality," prohibits schools from presenting homosexuality as positive behavior, and bans same-gender marriage.

"The Citizens Alliance of Washington is forcing parents and children apart and going to new extremes in pursuit of its anti-gay political agenda," stated GLPCI in a January press release. "The Radical Right has tried before to deny lesbians and gays from becoming foster parents and adopting children who need good homes," said Tim Fisher, Executive Director of GLPCI. "But this is their first attempt to enact legislation which prohibits lesbians and gays from retaining custody of their own children in a divorce.

"The best interests of children" are clearly irrelevant in the Religious Right's anti-gay crusade. The initiative states that upon dissolution of a marriage where one of the parents is gay or lesbian, the other parent will receive custody. Where both parents are gay, custody will be awarded to the nearest non-gay relative. If no such person exists, children will be taken from their parents and put in foster care or put up for adoption.

Children of lesbian and gay parents around the country reacted to the news from Washington state with disbelief. "They say they're 'pro-family,' then they force families apart," commented Stefan Lynch of CO-LAGE, Children of Lesbians and Gays Everywhere. "When my parents split up," continued Lynch, a college All-American, "they both came out as gay and stayed friends and great parents. And I know a lot of kids in the same situation. If it were up to those people in Washington, I would have been

*(continued on page 2)*

### Vatican Blasts European Parliament Saying Our Families Aren't Real

On Sunday, February 20th, Pope John Paul II blasted the European Parliament for approving a non-binding resolution that gay and lesbian couples be allowed to marry and adopt children. "A relationship between two men and two women cannot make up a real family," said the Pontiff. "You cannot grant such a union the right to adopt children."

"The Pope says that our families aren't real," stated GLPCI in its response to the press. "Yet we own homes, cook dinner, help with homework, pay our taxes, go to church, drive the kids to soccer practice, and read bedtime stories. What's not real about our families?

Bonnie Tinker, a lesbian mother with Portland, Oregon's Love Makes a Family, Inc., commented, "One thing that we've heard from the anti-gay campaign in Oregon and across the U.S.A. is that the right wing doesn't want to discriminate against anyone. At least the Pope is honestly acknowledging that he does believe in discrimination. To call upon European nations

*(continued on page 3)*

### Woman of the Year?

U.S. Surgeon General Joycelyn Elders

"Good parents are good parents— regardless of their sexual orientation. It's clear that the sexual orientation of parents has nothing to do with the sexual orientation or outlook of their children. Many children in this society are born unwanted, and I feel that if gay or lesbian couples feel that they want children enough to adopt, well, then they are probably as capable of being good parents as heterosexual parents who choose to adopt. Gays and lesbians are not going to choose to adopt or have their own children unless they really want children. They are making a conscious choice. We have too many parents who did not choose, nor did they want, to be parents." ▼

## *Destroy the Myths!*

With the increased visibility of lesbians and gays comes the inevitable backlash from the Radical Right. The common thread underlying all of the anti-gay organizing sweeping the United States is "Save Our Children." Legislatures are debating our right to adopt children; schools are being prevented from discussing the facts of our lives; and libraries are being censored of materials which mention our families. Lesbian and gay parents — along with teachers and librarians — are destroying the myths about our families and emerging as an important line of defense in guaranteeing basic civil rights for all gays and lesbians.

### Anti-Gay Ballot Initiatives

Eight states — Arizona, Florida, Idaho, Maine, Michigan, Missouri, Oregon, and Washington — are hotbeds of anti-gay organizing. At least ten local jurisdictions are also preparing to vote. The total number of ballot fights in the United States could number as high as 27 — up from last year's record of 16, all at the local level, and all approved.

Now some good news: the Florida Supreme Court unanimously struck down a proposed anti-gay ballot measure from the November ballot. In Oregon, a county circuit court judge declared the anti-gay statewide initiative unconstitutional; the right-wing will appeal to a higher court. In Maine, the proposed measure failed to get enough signatures to qualify for the November ballot.

### Schools

The Utah State Board of Education voted to prohibit textbooks that "accept or advocate" homosexuality.

In Juneau, Alaska, a failed attempt to remove *Daddy's Roommate* from the school libraries has become a major issue in this fall's school board elections.

In Fairfax County, Virginia, the school board, responding to pressure from conservatives, is once again reviewing a gay-positive Family Life curriculum.

In Texas, book publisher Holt, Rinehart and Winston pulled its high school health textbook out of the lucrative Texas market rather than make the 400 changes demanded by conservatives in discussions of condom use, homosexuality, and other sexual issues.

### Libraries

In New Hampshire, the state chapter of Eagle Forum (Phyllis Schlafly's group) is offering books to libraries which portray gays as unhealthy. They hope to offset an earlier book distribution by P-FLAG.

The American Library Association reports gay-themed books were the top target of censorship attempts in public and school libraries in 1993. #1 on the hit list: *Daddy's Roommate*.

In the Kansas City, Missouri area, a chapter of Project 21, a group dedicated to providing students with fair and accurate information about lesbians and gay men, has been donating books to school libraries — with mixed success and much uproar. Hundreds of students staged a "check-out" of 3,000 books to show their opposition to censorship.

In libraries in Hales Corner, Wisconsin and Fairfax County, Virginia, local gay newspapers have been moved to higher shelves to "protect" children. In Fairfax, the library system has ordered more than one hundred books that discuss how to "cure" homosexuality after right-wingers alleged that the system's collection promotes a pro-gay agenda.

In Martha's Vineyard, Mass., parents want *Heather Has Two Mommies* and *How Would You Feel If Your Dad Was Gay?* pulled from library shelves.

### Legislatures

In Washington State, the Megan Lucas case (see page 6) has inspired a bill to ban foster parenting by homosexuals, bisexuals, transsexuals and transvestites. Another bill mirrors one of the proposed anti-gay initiatives, prohibiting schools from presenting homosexuality as "positive, normal behavior." The state's gay civil rights bill lost recently by a total of one vote.

In Virginia, a legislative attempt to prevent gays and lesbians from gaining custody of their own children failed.

In New Hampshire, a bill to outlaw same-sex marriages — which may at some future date be granted in other states — would declare adopted children of such marriages as "illegitimate."

In South Carolina, a bill passed in the House of Representatives banning adoption and foster parenting by lesbians, gays and bisexuals. Last year, activists had successfully prevented a floor vote, but this year supporters of the bill unexpectedly scheduled a vote. The bill goes to the state Senate, and Governor Carroll Campbell has said he supports it.

In Missouri, the state Senate recently considered a bill to bar schools from teaching that homosexuality is an acceptable "lifestyle."

*Sources: P-FLAG, GLAAD-San Francisco, The Advocate, Frontiers, The Seattle Gay News, The New York Native, Stonewall News, The Martha's Vineyard Times, The New York Times and The Washington Blade.* ▼

## Washington's Anti-Gay Initiative Hits New Low (continued)

taken from my home and family, and placed with strangers." "If I was ever taken away from my dad," said Kate Ranson-Walsh, a 13-year-old whose parents split up five years ago, "I don't know what I would do. It's not fair. He's the best dad in the world."

Sam Woodard, director of the initiative's sponsoring organization, the Citizens Alliance of Washington, reacted to these comments, saying that taking a child from its parents would not traumatize the child. He called any trauma that may result "mushy stuff getting blown out of proportion."

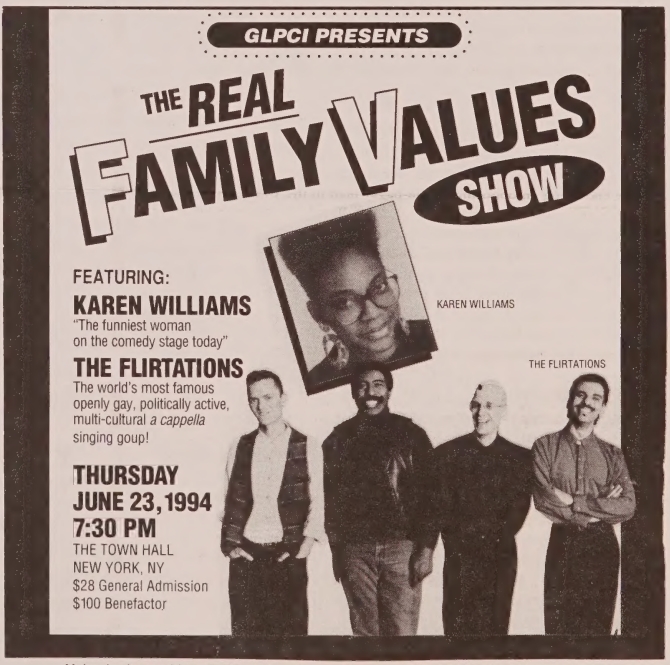
"The Right needs a scapegoat to coalesce its power base — and we're it," explained psychologist April Martin, author of *The Lesbian and Gay Parenting Hand-book*. "We're the basis upon which they get people to fork over their money." ▼

## Top News Story — Mississippi's Camp Sister Spirit

Lovers Brenda and Wanda Henson, who run a rural food bank and literacy program, are facing the battle of their lives to defend their lesbian-feminist collective in Mississippi. NGLTF believes that their case may finally get lesbians and gays included in the 1964 U.S. Civil Rights Act. You can send donations of food, money, supplies, rainbow flags, and postage stamps to: Camp Sister Spirit, P.O. Box 12, Ovett, MS 39464.

*But did you know that the Hensons are Lesbian Mothers?*

Pictured above clockwise from top left): Wanda and Brenda; Brenda's daughter, Andrea; Brenda's mom, Mary; and seated, Wanda's daughter, Terri (photo courtesy of *Outlines*). Additionally, Wanda's son helps out at the camp.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## Pope Says Our Families Aren't Real (continued)

to exclude lesbians and gays from marriage and to prevent them from adopting children is discrimination."

"What a tragedy for a church leader to promulgate prejudice on a continent where children are dying every day because of religious and ethnic bigotry," added Tinker. "The world needs more love, not less. Real families and real Christians are known by the love and commitment that binds them to each other and to their neighbors and not by their sexual orientation."

"Adoption by lesbians and gay men may be controversial," said Julie Jenkins, a Michigan social worker and lesbian adoptive mother of three, "but it's clearly in the best interest of the millions of children around the world who need good homes. Lesbians and gays can successfully raise, educate and nurture children, and many of us are highly motivated to do so."

"The Catholic Church excommunicated Galileo for saying that the planets revolve around the sun, and it took over 350 years to admit they were wrong," quipped GLPCI's press release. "Hopefully, they'll come to understand the truths about our families much sooner than that." ▼

## Once Around the Globe

In Britain, Health Secretary Virginia Bottomley, unveiled the first change in adoption law and practice in two decades. Stating a preference for married couples, her white paper encourages transracial adoptions and relaxes restrictions against "older people in their forties." But, "homosexual couples are not able to adopt a child now and there's no intention that they should be able." — from *The London Times*

A Dutch lesbian, living with her female lover and children, was denied alimony from her former husband of 17 years, because the judge ruled that the women's relationship was no different than a heterosexual relationship. — from *Outlines*

In France, the conservative-dominated Senate voted in January to ban: access for lesbians to alternative insemination; mixing sperm for insemination; and widows from using the preserved sperm of their deceased husbands. French health minister Simone Veil said she wanted to ensure that "we stay very close to nature," but critics charged the government with "genetic totalitarianism." Three bills now go to the National Assembly. — from *The Advocate* and *The Washington Blade*

A London court rejected a father's claim for visitation because he had abused the child's lesbian mother during their marriage. The mother's solicitor called it "a huge victory" — "usually in cases involving lesbian mothers, the courts look favorably on the father's application because they believe the child is in greater need of contact with his or her father." — from *The Pink Paper* ▼

## The U.S. Health Care Debate

The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF) has criticized the proposed Clinton health reform plan, but is still working to improve it, despite endorsing an opposing single-payer plan in the U.S. Congress.

NGLTF's Health Policy Director, Marj Plumb, is concerned that the Clinton plan's anti-discrimination clauses exclude sexual orientation and its "morals clause" allows health professionals or facilities to refuse services if there are "objections to doing so on the basis of religious belief or moral conviction." Further, the Clinton plan defers to the states to define what constitutes a family. A gay or lesbian couple with children would likely pay two premiums, and double the annual deductible and out-of-pocket expenses. — from *The Washington Blade* ▼

## News Briefs

A Florida state court of appeals ruled that the state can bar gays and lesbians from adopting children, overturning two county court decisions which had allowed them. In the U.S., only Florida and New Hampshire have such bans.

In North Carolina, a lesbian mother and her partner have been charged with sexually abusing their two-year-old daughter. Activists say the charges are part of an attempt by the child's grandmother to gain custody of the girl, which began brewing when the mother came out last year. Menacing phone calls, slashed tires, gun shots, and muggings proceeded their arrest in January on child abuse charges. After 26 days in jail, the partner posted bail, but the women are unable to raise additional money to free the mother. — from *The Front Page* ▼

## Bibliography of Books for Our Children

Updated for Spring 1994 — an annotated bibliography of over 85 picture books for children (birth to age 11) of gay and lesbian parents ($2.50). Also available ($5) — "Bibliography on Gays and Lesbians and Their Families." Write: GLPCI, Box 50360, Washington, DC 20091, U.S.A. ▼

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# "Staying Married" — Interview

Recently, GLPCI received a brochure for a day-long conference titled "Professional Issues in Working With Gays, Lesbians and Their Families" in Fargo, North Dakota. Among the presenters of a panel on Sexual Orientation and the Christian Church, is a married couple, Paul and Lois Eid from Minneapolis, Minnesota. Paul and Lois have a marriage which has survived for many years, stated the brochure, despite Paul's revelation to Lois that he is gay. Paul is a retired Lutheran minister and social worker. Lois works for a brokerage firm. They have four children including a gay son. Intrigued by this thumbnail sketch, we called Paul and asked him to share his story with us.

**When did you realize you were gay?**

I was born into a preacher's family in South Dakota in 1923, so that makes me 71 now. I was the seventh of nine children and knew that I was different almost from the beginning. I was the only one of the six boys who wasn't good at sports. I had a strong crush on a male teacher in high school. And by the time I graduated, I knew that my inclination was toward other men.

**Yet you became a minister?**

I had a religious experience that I felt meant I should definitely go into the ministry. So I set my heart steadfastly on achieving that, and tried to lay aside my sexuality issues. I managed to do that in terms of any activity, but there was always someone I was having a crush on. It was in New York at the graduate seminary when I began to come to terms with my sexuality and got into what would be called pastoral counseling now. I began coming out to my counselors and leaders and so on.

**What was it like to come out in the church in the early 1950s?**

I got tremendous support from the chaplain — it was an overwhelming experience for me, to be accepted by somebody within the church. That made me feel that I could still be within the church. By that time, I'd had some homosexual experiences — one in particular with a gay Episcopal priest. It seemed wonderful to start with, but eventually I just couldn't tolerate the anxiety and guilt. So I got into therapy — and to make a long story short — I convinced myself that I had been healed of my homosexuality.

**When did you get married?**

Shortly after, I met my wife to be. She had been here in the Midwest in college, but came back to her home on the east coast and worked in a church there. We had a lot in common. I was very attracted to her, but not in the way I had been attracted to men. I somehow convinced myself that this was real genuine love — which it was, minus the affectional kind of thing.

We were married in 1955. I had taken a parish in New Jersey, but before long I realized that I couldn't tolerate being in a parish situation. One of the major reasons was my guilt about my sexuality. At that point, I had shared nothing with my wife. I just kept it all under wraps. I decided to move back to the Midwest, get a Master's, and go into Lutheran social service work.

**What was married life like?**

We've had a good relationship. We're both very committed people. I

"To make a long story short — I convinced myself that I had been healed of my homosexuality."

was committed to being faithful to my wife and managed to do that almost totally for the next 23 years — with a couple of slips. They weren't one night stands, just very brief encounters. Of course, I felt tremendously guilty about all of that, and tried to go back into maintaining the relationship.

The problem for me was I was taking it out on myself physically. I ended up at two different times having major surgery and almost died once. And then I developed a chronic depression that I had to get help with and work through. But aside from my conflictedness around hiding my sexuality, we did well as a family.

**What changed after 23 years?**

I went along with a chemically-dependent brother of mine for a week of family treatment. By the time that week was over, I knew that I had to do something about coming out to someone, so I came out to my counselors in that program. They directed me to another program at the University of Minnesota, which I used to get ready to come out to my wife in 1978.

**What happened in the program?**

In these treatment programs, people try to work through their own issues, whatever they are. I was trying to deal with relationships with my family and keeping my sexuality under cover. It just wasn't working at all. I realized that I was in such agony, I simply had to do something about it.

**What was your wife's reaction?**

It was one of total shock and sent her into a tailspin. She's a very stable kind of a woman — I'm the one who has always needed the therapy. But she was really depressed and almost suicidal for a while. I was really uncertain whether I could manage — whether or not we could really save the marriage. It took us about five years to work through all of that.

**How did you both cope during that rocky period?**

I got into a fathers group (in fact, I'm one of the founding fathers), and relied a lot on their support. My wife got into a wives group that was similar. She wanted to stay in the relationship from the start. From her point of view, the fact that I was gay didn't need to ruin our relationship and our home. One of her college friends also married a Lutheran clergyman, and it turned out that they were going through exactly the same thing that we were — so that's been important for Lois.

**What kept you together?**

I did assume the freedom to be sexual for a while. But soon, I knew

that I could not stay in the relationship and be sexual outside of it — I just couldn't tolerate that. So about ten years ago, I decided that marriage, home and family was the most important thing to me and I would settle for a celibate kind of existence. It's really been the best answer for me, and for us. I haven't for a minute felt it was the wrong decision.

**When did you come out to your children?**

Within two years of coming out to my wife, we decided it made sense to come out to our kids. Actually what precipitated that was also a chemical-dependency thing. Our oldest son is chemically dependent, and chose to go into treatment and asked us if we would go along with him. I knew from having been through this before that I didn't want to go into that program and have to hide my sexuality issues.

**How did your children react?**

Our oldest daughter was very angry with me, not because I'm gay, but she felt that it was the wrong time for our son who was going into treatment. Actually, I think my coming out to him was well timed and really helped us to develop a close trusting relationship through the treatment process and afterwards. Once he knew about my sexuality, he was free to come and talk to me about anything.

Our youngest daughter was 10 at the time, and we're not quite sure that she really comprehended what it was all about. But it's never been an issue for us. Our gay son was about 15 and we were already pretty sure that he was gay. But we didn't broach the issue of his sexuality with him until he was in college. My wife and I decided that we would be more comfortable if we talked with him about his sexuality. So we arranged a get-together and he came out to us. He says he's forever grateful that we did that.

> " I decided that marriage, home and family was the most important thing to me and I would settle for a celibate kind of existence. "

**How have you changed since coming out?**

My physical problems haven't continued to be a real problem for me. The depression, I just don't have it anymore. I think that's a combination of coming out and also the decisions that we've had to make — how we would work this out in the family, whether this was the best thing, and so forth.

I've also done a coming out spiritually-speaking. And that's been really important to me in terms of my developing relationships and my sense of being a whole person.

**How do other gay fathers in your group view your staying married?**

I get a degree of admiration from many of them, because it is pretty uncommon as I'm sure you're aware. But married or divorced, we've all pretty much agreed each person has to do it in their own way and in their own time. We try not to generalize as to how to work things out.

**You mentioned that you're now celibate.**

My view of celibacy is not the Roman Catholic view, which outlaws even masturbation or self-pleasuring. I don't think I could have worked this out if I weren't able to pleasure myself if and whenever I feel a need for it. The need for sexual release is still very much a part of me. I'm still very attracted to men, and I get a considerable amount of satisfaction going to the health club and being able to see men. I've always had a rich fantasy life and that was really important to me in the years before I came out to my wife. The major difference now is I don't have that guilt about it any more.

**That was very tastefully stated. Thanks for sharing that.**

It is sort of critical. I think that is what has enabled me to remain and be with my wife — and for our marriage to continue to be a marriage in all aspects except genital sexuality.

**So what will your main message be at the conference?**

I'm concerned about the number of married gay clergy. I think there are a lot of them out there. I get calls and referrals, and being in the gay community, I know of gay men who are still clergy, still married and still not out to their wives or anybody. And based on my experience they pay a tremendous price — physically and emotionally and spiritually. My life is a testimonial to the fact that while coming out can be a really rough road, the price is worth it. ▼


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## Can You Tell Me How To Get To *Sesame Street*?

"They're two grown men sharing a house — and a bedroom! They share clothes. They eat and cook together. They vacation together and they have effeminate characteristics. In one show, Bert teaches Ernie to sew. In another, they tend plants together. If this isn't meant to represent a homosexual union, I can't imagine what it's supposed to represent." — Reverend Joseph Chambers, a Pentecostal minister from Charlotte, NC

**Rubyfruit Mountain** by Andrea Natalie

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"Bert and Ernie do not portray a Gay couple, and there are no plans for them to do so in the future. They are puppets, not humans." — Children's Television Workshop, producers of TV's *Sesame Street*

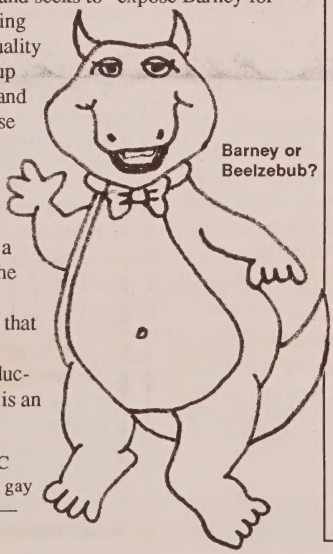
"It's a shame Children's Television Workshop had to [issue that statement]. Maybe it's time for *Sesame Street* to tackle the subject. Kids — and a few parents — need to know that a person's sexual orientation really shouldn't matter." — *TV Guide*'s "Cheers 'N' Jeers" column

"A Gay or Lesbian character, whether a person or a puppet, would fit nicely into the multicultural neighborhood that forms the backdrop for the show. With more than half of the U.S. children between the ages of two and five watching *Sesame Street*, the impact would be significant." — Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation ▼

## Barney and Fiends

North Carolina's Reverend Joseph Chambers, who runs a four-state radio ministry, doesn't like Barney, the purple dinosaur, any more than Bert and Ernie. Chambers charges in his new book, *Barney, the Purple Messiah*, that the popular PBS children's show character is "straight out of the world of demons and devils" because he is "teaching kids that we must accept everyone as they are — whether they're homosexuals or lesbians."

Citizens Concerned About Barney agrees and seeks to "expose Barney for what he really is" — a wussy purple demon using his show to steer children straight to homosexuality and, eventually, hell. The Tampa, Florida group considers Barney the world's most dangerous and pervasive influence. "He's always leading these bizarre chants and bizarre rhymes that request magical things," said the group's co-founder, Luscious Bromley. "It smacks of New Age religion, secular humanism, witchcraft and the occult." Besides, he said, Barney's identity as a dinosaur buys into the blasphemous idea that the world existed millions of year's ago. "If you believe the Bible," Bromley said, "you believe that the world is only 6,000 years old."



**Barney or Beelzebub?**

A spokeswoman for the Lyon Group, producers of *Barney and Friends*, denied that Barney is an instrument of Satan. — from *The Advocate* ▼

**Hollywood Hotline...**A future storyline on ABC TV's top-rated *Roseanne* will feature Martin Mull's gay character getting a boyfriend and adopting a child. — from *The Hollywood Reporter* ▼

**71%** of Canadians say lesbians should not be allowed to be artificially inseminated.

**46%** believe single women should also be barred from the procedure.

However, a Royal Canadian Commission on New Reproductive Technologies has stated that *all women* — regardless of sexual orientation — should have access to reproductive technologies.
Source: *Xtra!*

## Gender-Bender Barbies and G.I. Joes a Holiday Hit

Talking G.I. Joe Battle Commander is supposed to roar off things like "Vengeance is mine!" and "Eat lead, Cobra." But instead, because of the work of a loose coalition of performance artists, feminists, parents and anti-war activists, several hundred G.I. Joes are saying "Will we ever have enough clothes?" and "Let's plan our dream wedding!"

The New York-area group, calling itself the Barbie Liberation Organization (or B.L.O.), bought some 300 G.I. Joe and Barbie dolls and swapped the computer chips inside the dolls. They were then carefully repackaged with a flyer urging the purchaser to contact the local media "about this funny doll they got" and stealthily put back onto toy store shelves in time for the Christmas rush.

The B.L.O. admits it was an "unabashed publicity stunt" to raise awareness of the antiquated gender stereotypes the toys reflect. But everyone appears thrilled with the new dolls. Mattel reports no one has accepted their offer to exchange the butch Barbies and femme Joes, and several major toy stores have reported inquiries about the gender-bender dolls. ▼

## News Updates

The appeal in the Sharon Bottoms custody case was heard in Richmond, Virginia in early February. Court observers were very encouraged by the judges' questioning, but a decision may still take several months. Amnesty International has criticized the United States for human rights abuse, citing the Bottoms case.

In Washington State, Megan Lucas, who has been fighting to block the adoption of her three-year-old son by a gay couple (see Winter 1993-94 *Network*), suffered a setback when her husband filed for separation in early February. In the filing, Wade Lucas accuses his wife of death threats, suicide attempts and general mental instability. The development makes it "extraordinarily unlikely" Megan Lucas will be able to get her son back, stated the Department of Social and Health Services, which reports the child is doing well in the home of Ross and Louis Lopton. — from *The Seattle Gay News* ▼

**65%** of Americans say same-sex couples should not have the right to adopt children.
Source: *Newsweek*

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Coming this fall from the author of *Daddy's Roommate* -- a new book for our kids, *Daddy's Wedding*. ▼

LESBIAN SURVIVAL HINT #224: IT'S PRETTY EASY TO SPOT THE KIDS WITH GAY PARENTS.

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## Parents Speak Out

Ms. Kathryn Hibbert
Unit Director of Region 7
P.O. Box 15995, Mail Code 016-1
Austin, TX 78761

March 23, 1994

Dear Ms. Hibbert

We are writing to you on behalf of the Gay and Lesbian Parents Coalition International (GLPCI), a support and advocacy group of over 2,100 member families with 65 chapters in five countries, and the 1,400 families who comprise Center Kids, the Family Project of the Lesbian and Gay Community Services Center of New York City, the largest local parents' support group in the world.

We have learned of the problems being experienced by Paul Schoeneweis and Michael Turner in their endeavors to adopt a child. We affirm the right of lesbians and gay men to adopt children emphatically and without reservation.

Every major peer-reviewed study conducted within the last 10 to 15 years has concluded that children raised by lesbian and gay parents are no different that children raised by heterosexual parents. In addition, the 1.4 million mental health professional members of the American Psychological Association, the National Association of Social Workers, and the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (among many others) concur with these findings in no uncertain terms.

As our nation's top health official, Joycelyn Elders, Surgeon General of the United States, recently stated in support of lesbians and gay men adopting, "good parents are good parents regardless of their sexual orientation." She has also stated that "Gays and Lesbians are not going to chose to adopt or have their own children unless they really want children. They are making a conscious choice. We have too many parents who did not chose, nor did they want, to be parents."

Our experience with lesbian and gay parents has shown that the energy, initiative and resolve that lesbians and gay men utilize to become adoptive parents carries over to their lives as parents once children have been placed in their homes. We are demonstratively more active in our children's schools, recreation, health care and other activities, utilizing skills and resources that we learned through the arduous path traveled to become parents. Our children thrive in the abundance of love which is given to them. They thrive in the knowledge of the deep concern their parents demonstrate for their well-being.

We urge the adoption proceedings for the child Paul and Michael wish to adopt move forward post haste. We urge you NOT to bend to the outside pressure of non-professionals. Please remember that the goal of adoption is what is in the best interests of the child, not the best interest of politics.

Love makes a Family!,

Tim Fisher
Executive Director
GLPCI

Wayne Steinman
Co-Founder and Co-Chair
Center Kids

***Note: Parents are encouraged to write Ms. Hibbert with their views.*** ▼

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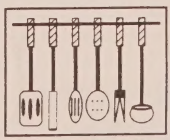

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The *Just For Us* Newsletter is by, for and about the Daughters and Sons of Lesbians and Gay men.

We publish a newsletter four times a year and if your kids aren't getting it, how about asking them to become subscribers? We ask for a $10 donation, but subscription is free. Please send addresses & donations (made payable to GLPCI) to COLAGE (Children of Lesbians and Gays Everywhere):

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## GLPCI Highlights — What We've Been Doing For YOU

- Signed onto an *amicus* brief prepared by the National Center for Lesbian Rights defending a family against a donor seeking parental rights;
- Welcomed new groups for parents in Baltimore, MD; Tucson, AZ; Seattle, WA; Santa Fe, NM; and Paris, France;
- Prepared a workshop on parenting around the world for the upcoming conference of the International Gay and Lesbian Association;
- Discussed Diversity and the future of GLPCI during a facilitated session at our Winter Board Meeting in Los Angeles;
- Provided information on psychological studies of our children and child custody matters to an Argentinean advocacy group;
- Formed a new support network for prospective dads — the Future Gay Fathers of America;
- Distributed Press Releases on the anti-gay initiative in Washington State and the Pope's attack on our families (see page 1);
- Assisted in media coverage of our families — *Telemundo, Women's World, Prime Time Live, Sassy* and *Glamour;*
- Networked with new parents' support groups in Hong Kong, South Africa, and Taiwan;
- Assisted in the planning of Stonewall 25's International March on the United Nations to Affirm the Human Rights of Lesbian and Gay People (June 26th) — Parents and Children will march near the front of the United Nations contingent. ▼

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### Our New Look

You may have noticed that this issue of *Network* is a little slimmer than past efforts. We've devised a way to reduce our printing and postage costs and still provide members with all the information they've received previously. GLPCI members will find our Directory of Resources, information on the Annual Conference and GLPCI member chapters among the enclosures they receive. For others interested in receiving more information on these topics, call GLPCI at (202) 583-8029 or fax us at (201) 783-6204.

### Our New Location

GLPCI's 15th Annual International Family Conference will be held on June 24th and 25th at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in White Plains, New York. It is located just north of New York City, a 35 minute train ride from Grand Central Station. The conference theme is "Family Values." Highlights will include: a talk show, a dinner cruise, a discussion between youth and adults, workshops, speakers, a banquet and a dance.

For more information, call (212) 874-4687.

Look for the Summer issue of *Network* on July 15th.

**NEXT ISSUE DEADLINE: June 15, 1994**

Ideas, Suggestions, Clippings from your local press? Write to: *GLPCI Network*, P.O. Box 43206, Upper Montclair, NJ 07043; or call/fax (201) 783-6204.

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Gay and Lesbian Parent's
Association of Birmingham

***September 13, 1994***

***So Cherished A Gift . . .***

***Hosted by:***
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G.A.L.A.A.

# Welcome Parents!

We, as G&L parents, are faced with the same problems and dilemmas as any other parent but our orientation subjects us to close scrutiny and often abandonement by society and the legal system. When questions arise, where can we turn? If trouble comes about, where do we go for help? Together, we can draw strength from each other's experiences and learn and grow in our parenting abilities! Every battle may not be a victory but we do not have to fight the war alone!

I would like to thank the Covenant Metropolitan Community Church for hosting this evening's meeting. Here is already built a loving and supportive environment where parents bring their children to be taught of God's love. Let us take a part of that away with us tonight and nurture it in our own attempts at coming together as a group dedicated to preserving the joy of parenthood for all persons.

Additionally, I would like thank Hank for agreeing to assist in forming this group. I have known him for many years and have had the pleasure of watching his two sons grow from toddlers to fine young children. You can feel the love of this family when they are together. The pride in Hank's eyes is equaled by the pride in his son's smiles when they look up and call him Dad.

As he is working on his Masters in counseling, he is well versed in managing support groups and advising individuals. I look forward to him being an integral part of this organization for years to come.

I am very excited about a G&L parents group forming here in Birmingham! If you feel the same as I do, this group is long overdue! Thank you for your interest this evening and, I hope, your active involvement in the future!

**J.L.George**
*Organizer,*
*G&L Parents Association of Birmingham*

## Agenda

*September 13, 1994*

* **Welcome**

* **Introductions**

* **Open Discussion**
  - Mission
  -Goals

* **GLPCI**

* **Appointment of officers**

* **Mailing List**

* **Adjourn**

## *A Fork In the Road*

*O, Child of mine,*
*So young and small,*
*If I could give the world*
*You'd have it all.*

*But to love and to cherish*
*All things that are rare,*
*They can't just be given*
*With no thought or no care.*

*So I'll show you the world*
*And the choice will be yours*
*Of the magnificient pathways*
*And to open which doors.*

*I'll walk proudly beside you*
*To show you the way,*
*To protect and to love you*
*For all of my days.*

*I'll walk no faster*
*Than your tiny feet can*
*And we'll both leave our mark*
*Deep in the land.*

*Too soon a fork in the road*
*Will end my path at your side*
*And you must continue alone*
*Using the past as your guide.*

*Look back and you'll see*
*The path made by a man*
*Who had missteps and stumbles*
*But never lost your hand.*

*My footprints are there*
*To be followed, not shared,*
*Your path can take your*
*Where mine never dared.*

*- G. L. Johnson*

LYNN MINTON REPORTS:

# FRESH VOICES®

## When a parent is homosexual

*We talked with two teenagers in the Washington, D.C., area who are the children of, and live with, a homosexual parent. One is Shaundra Hodges, 17. The other is "Bill," also 17, who shares with some in his situation a fear of being identified and has asked us not to reveal his real name. Both teenagers are members of a local support group for young people with homosexual parents. Other children living in similar households will be heard from in a future column.*

**"Bill" keeps his father's homosexuality a secret; Shaundra is open about her mother's. He feels alienated; she, after some tough times, is now comfortable with her family life.**

### "BILL"

**Lynn Minton: When did you realize your father was gay?**

**Bill:** I remember men being in the house at some point after my mom died. But I don't remember knowing that they were my dad's partners. And I don't think we ever had a conversation like, "Dad, are you gay?" But when I realized the truth, I was angry at him, because everybody else was different and because I had to lie to everybody.

**LM: Why wasn't he telling people?**

**Bill:** Because of the prejudice. Which would ruin his life and my life.

**LM: To this day?**

**Bill:** Yes. I don't want anybody to know anyway. Because it would cause ridicule and lose me some friends. The only people who know about my dad are his gay friends, two sets of aunts and uncles, and our teen group.

**LM: Isn't it hard keeping the secret from your really close friends?**

**Bill:** It's hard feeling that there's something you're not sharing with your friends. Or that you're lying. Like when they ask if my father is dating right now, and I'm like, "No." "Does he have a girlfriend?" "No." That's when it gets kind of difficult—you feel like there's a little skeleton in your closet that you're not bringing out.

**LM: Do you feel comfortable bringing your friends home?**

**Bill:** As long as I know there aren't any gay magazines, gay movies—anything that would cause somebody to suspect—around. I used to do a sweep before I would bring a friend home, but now stress *a little*. It wasn't like he was asking me, "How do you feel about my being gay?" It was more like me saying, "You know, man, I'm getting sick of lying, and I'm getting sick of all these people coming over to the house."

**LM: How did he respond?**

**Bill:** He was sympathetic. But he basically explained that this is the way he is. If I go over to someone else's house and see their mom and dad together, I get kind of envious.

**LM: What if someone at school makes a nasty remark about gays?**

**Bill:** If the comment is super-high-intensity, like, "All faggots should be put in a boat and burned," I'll probably say, "That's stupid." If it's medium- or low-intensity, I probably won't say anything, or I'll tell them to shut up. If I said, "There's nothing wrong with being gay," I'd be worried that it might lead them to believe something about *my* sexuality. And I don't want that. Because I'm not gay.

**LM: Do these situations make you tense?**

**Bill:** Yes. Because you feel strongly, but you have to keep your mouth shut.

grandmother told her she'd burn in hell, so she decided it was a sin and she was going to repent.

Now she was totally changing our lives. She kind of jubilated in freedom, and she dated a lot. I felt like, "This isn't my mother. She's not supposed to be having relationships like that." I think it would have been the same if she'd been dating men. It's the concept of your parents having relationships.

This was a very hard time. And my mom was the cause. It was very hard not to hate her for that. And for who she was and who she was living with. And I did hate her. I'd cry in my room. I'd hug my teddy bear and just rock back and forth, hoping to God all of this would just go away. The only thing that kept me off the edge was our teen group. Without the support of those kids, I don't know what I would have done—there was never a time when I was alone, knowing my mother was a lesbian.

In eighth grade,

**Shaundra:** People used to ask me, "Why aren't you telling people that your mom is a lesbian? Are you ashamed of her?" But it wasn't shame. It was fear. Of being rejected. Of being put out alone.

**LM: Have you ever said, "Don't get affectionate when my friends are around"?**

**Shaundra:** I tell my mom, "You don't want me showing PDA [public display of affection] in front of you, then I don't want to see PDA in front of my friends." When my boyfriend is over, my mom doesn't see anything more than the occasional kiss. And I don't see any more of her and her partner, unless I barge into her bedroom without knocking. Which I've learned not to do.

It's just recently that I've started having people come over to my house. From sixth through 10th grade, my mother had different kinds of women over for dinner, and I just did not feel comfortable letting other people see my household. But I finally, finally, have a stable family that I can come home to—and that I want to come home to—and where I can feel comfortable bringing my friends.

**LM: What do you feel other kids don't understand?**

**Shaundra:** The pain you feel because your religion has shunned your mother, because your mother is hated by some people for just being in love. And the conflicts within yourself because your mother has made your life harder because of who she is, yet you wouldn't want her any other way.

Everyone at school knows now that

house at some point after my mom died. But I don't remember knowing that they were my dad's partners. And I don't think we ever had a conversation like, "Dad, are you gay?" But when I realized the truth, I was angry at him, because everybody else was different and because I had to lie to everybody.

**LM: Why wasn't he telling people?**

**Bill:** Because of the prejudice. Which would ruin his life and my life.

**LM: To this day?**

**Bill:** Yes. I don't want anybody to know anyway. Because it would cause ridicule and lose me some friends. The only people who know about my dad are his gay friends, two sets of aunts and uncles, and our teen group.

**LM: Isn't it hard keeping the secret from your really close friends?**

**Bill:** It's hard feeling that there's something you're not sharing with your friends. Or that you're lying. Like when they ask if my father is dating right now, and I'm like, "No." "Does he have a girlfriend?" "No." That's when it gets kind of difficult—you feel like there's a little skeleton in your closet that you're not bringing out.

**LM: Do you feel comfortable bringing your friends home?**

**Bill:** As long as I know there aren't any gay magazines, gay movies—anything that would cause somebody to suspect—around. I used to do a sweep before I would bring a friend home, but now my dad keeps them in his room.

**LM: Did you ever bring a friend home when your dad's partner was there?**

**Bill:** Yes. When my father dates, he dates seriously—people who are around for a long time—and I say it's my dad's friend.

**LM: Are you comfortable with the situation?**

**Bill:** No. Even though I understand this whole thing about homosexuality being equal, I'd still prefer it if he were heterosexual. I feel like I could relate to him more or something.

**LM: Did you talk about this with your father?**

**Bill:** We talked about it a little, but I about my being gay?" It was more like me saying, "You know, man, I'm getting sick of lying, and I'm getting sick of all these people coming over to the house."

**LM: How did he respond?**

**Bill:** He was sympathetic. But he basically explained that this is the way he is. If I go over to someone else's house and see their mom and dad together, I get kind of envious.

**LM: What if someone at school makes a nasty remark about gays?**

**Bill:** If the comment is super-high-intensity, like, "All faggots should be put in a boat and burned," I'll probably say, "That's stupid." If it's medium- or low-intensity, I probably won't say anything, or I'll tell them to shut up. If I said, "There's nothing wrong with being gay," I'd be worried that it might lead them to believe something about *my* sexuality. And I don't want that. Because I'm not gay.

**LM: Do these situations make you tense?**

**Bill:** Yes. Because you feel strongly, but you have to keep your mouth shut.

**LM: Has your father's homosexuality ever caused you to question your own sexuality?**

**Bill:** The thought that I could be gay because of my father crossed my mind a bunch of times, but it never really stuck in deep, because I've never actually been physically attracted to a male.

**Bill's father is keeping a secret; Shaundra is open about her mother's. He feels alienated; she, after some tough times, is now comfortable with her family life.**

### SHAUNDRA

**Shaundra:** My mother and father separated when I was 11. One night a few months later, my mother was mopping the kitchen floor, and she said, "There's something I need to tell you about."

My mother said she'd known she was a lesbian since she was 12. But my sin and she was going to repent.

Now she was totally changing our lives. She kind of jubilated in freedom, and she dated a lot. I felt like, "This isn't my mother. She's not supposed to be having relationships like that." I think it would have been the same if she'd been dating men. It's the concept of your parents having relationships.

This was a very hard time. And my mom was the cause. It was very hard not to hate her for that. And for who she was and who she was living with. And I did hate her. I'd cry in my room. I'd hug my teddy bear and just rock back and forth, hoping to God all of this would just go away. The only thing that kept me off the edge was our teen group. Without the support of those kids, I don't know what I would have done—there was never a time when I was alone, knowing my mother was a lesbian.

Shaundra Hodges

In eighth grade, I told my best friend, and she betrayed me. She went around, "Shaundra's mother is a lesbian." One girl threatened to beat me up and dedicated herself to trying to make my life miserable.

But in my class were kids I'd grown up with all my life and, for the most part, they didn't hate me and they didn't shun me. When one guy went around calling my mother names, one of my friends came up to him and said, "This is not the type of stuff you should be doing."

**LM: Is there anything you'd like to say to other teenagers?**

shame. It was fear. Of being rejected. Of being put out alone.

**LM: Have you ever said, "Don't get affectionate when my friends are around"?**

**Shaundra:** I tell my mom, "You don't want me showing PDA [public display of affection] in front of you, then I don't want to see PDA in front of my friends." When my boyfriend is over, my mom doesn't see anything more than the occasional kiss. And I don't see any more of her and her partner, unless I barge into her bedroom without knocking. Which I've learned not to do.

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**LM: What do you feel other kids don't understand?**

**Shaundra:** The pain you feel because your religion has shunned your mother, because your mother is hated by some people for just being in love. And the conflicts within yourself because your mother has made your life harder because of who she is, yet you wouldn't want her any other way.

Everyone at school knows now that my mother is a lesbian. I'm not willing to hide it anymore. There was this argument we had in class about gay and lesbian rights, and someone said, "They're disgusting and they're all child-molesters." And I looked him dead in the eye, and I said, "My mother is a lesbian. And she's not a child-molester. And she's my mother, and you take that back."

*There is a national support group run by and for the children of homosexual parents. For information, write to: COLAGE, 2300 Market St. #165, Dept. P, San Francisco, Calif. 94114.*

**TEENAGERS: WHAT DO YOU THINK? HAVE YOU HAD AN EXPERIENCE SIMILAR TO BILL'S OR SHAUNDRA'S? DO YOU KNOW SOMEONE WHO HAS? Write Lynn Minton, Box 4166, Grand Central Station, New York, N.Y. 10163-4166. Please include daytime phone number. Every letter is read, but personal replies regrettably are not possible.**

Summer 1994 Issue

Newsletter of the
Gay and Lesbian Parents
Coalition International

Providing Support and
Information Services for
Parents Around the World

*United Nations International Year of the Family — 1994*

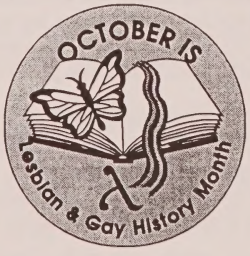
*"There are many different types of family structure, with different strengths and weaknesses. Both within and among countries, any image of what constitutes the 'ideal family' will differ greatly. Policies affecting the family should seek to avoid promoting, implicitly or explicitly, a single ideal image of the family."*

*On Pedophilia:*

*"Ninety-seven percent of child seduction is heterosexual." — Dr. Benjamin Spock*

*"I tell people that it would be safer to have their children babysat by a homosexual male than a heterosexual. I often get this very surprised look." — Detective James McLaughlin, child abuse expert*

*"Homosexuality and pedophilia are not synonymous!" — Dear Abby*

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# GLPCi Network

## "Keeping Connected"-- Interview

*What happens when a lesbian or gay couple breaks up and there are children involved? Many parents, not protected by biological ties or second-parent adoptions, are unrecognized as such by the courts and sometimes by society as well.*

*In this issue, Network interviews a support group in New York City called "Keeping Connected." A core group of four lesbian mothers meets twice a month to discuss the issues involving the children they've lost contact with and their past relationships. Through the process of supporting one another and dealing with their grief, these women have developed new insights into who they are and how they are viewed by our community.*

*Readers, whether you've divorced or happily coupled — male or female — you'll probably find their perspective to be thought-provoking and persuasive.*

*(continued on page 4)*

## NAMBLA Booted Out of ILGA

After months of controversy involving the United Nations, the U.S. Senate and the infamous Senator Jesse Helms, the International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA) voted on June 30th to oust the North American Man Boy Love Association (NAMBLA) and two European pedophile groups.

In January, Helms introduced a law to reduce U.S. funding of the United Nations, unless the U.N. cut its ties with organizations condoning pedophilia.

ILGA, which opposes pedophilia, had until the end of June to remove any member groups that differed with this position or risk losing its consultative status to the U.N. Requiring an 80% vote of the member delegates to its annual conference, ILGA members voted 214 to 30 to remove the pedophile groups.

A spokesperson for Helms said the vote was a "step in the right direction," but the senator still believes that ILGA should lose its consultative status.

"The senator acts on an element of

*(continued on page 3)*

**I'M NOT A STRAIGHT PERSON, BUT I PLAY ONE ON TV.**

And that's just where acting belongs—on television or in the movies. Not in real life. That's why I stopped acting and came out. I told people I'm a lesbian. More and more gay men and lesbians are finding out how great it feels to tell someone they care about.

**National Coming Out Day is October 11**

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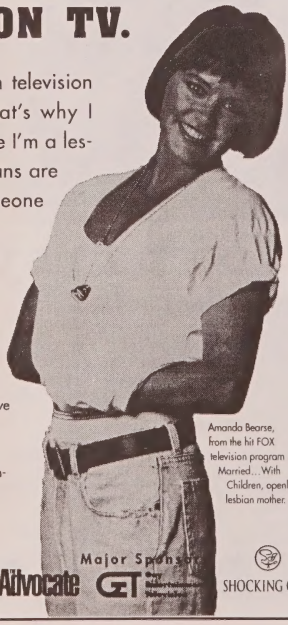


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## Sometimes It's Worth It... by Larry Bailey

The author is a member of the Gay Fathers Association of Seattle and a GLPCI Regional Coordinator.

Just the day before, I had slowly resolved within myself that the next four months would be spent on the campaign trails trying to defeat the radical right's anti-gay Initiative 608. If it made it to the ballot, it would be voted on in the November election. I had spent the previous nine months working in the "Hands Off Washington" campaign and more recently with the Bigot Busters to keep it off the ballot. Around mid-morning I received a phone call from my older daughter. "Hey dad," she excitedly explained, "I think the people for 608 are getting signatures at the Ferry Terminal again!"

Rushing off to the Terminal, I stopped only long enough to give Bigot Busters a quick phone call to report the sighting and let them know that I was on my way to check it out. "Won't this ever stop?" I kept asking myself, even though I knew that the proponents only had until 5:00 that afternoon to turn the required number of signatures into the State of Washington's Secretary of State. Previous news accounts indicated they were very close to that figure.

When I got to the Edmonds Ferry dock, I saw there were at least four signature gatherers hustling through the holding lanes. I knew I would have to repeat the same procedures that I had done many times before to try to convince people not to sign the initiatives, the same hassle with the traffic police, the same warding off of the harassment from signature gatherers, and their same rapid departure when more Bigot Busters showed up.

Arriving home just after 2:30 in the afternoon and feeling drained of energy, I flopped down into a lounge chair — the events of that morning still spinning in my mind, the hateful comments directed toward homosexuals still repeating themselves. The work that I had planned to get accomplished that day still lay on my desk, staring me in the face. The stack of unreturned phone calls was a constant reminder of how far behind in my life I felt myself slipping.

A little after three o'clock, the phone jarred me back into reality. "Larry, this is Lowell," the voice excitedly proclaimed. I immediately thought to myself, "Oh shit, another sighting of signature gatherers!" "It's over — It's over! They conceded that they don't have the signatures!"

Lowell, from the Bigot Busters' phone bank, was shouting into the phone, "They just called the Secretary of State's office to say they weren't bringing the signatures in!"

The rest of the afternoon was blurred with phone calls, uncertainty if it was actually true and shouts of joy. The evening was spent with other Bigot Busters parading through Seattle's Capitol Hill, chanting and shouting victory slogans. When I finally crawled into bed after 1:00 a.m., I remembered that I had to get up at 5:00 in the morning to drive up to Vancouver, British Columbia to attend a board meeting of a horticultural society.

The next day upon leaving Denny's Restaurant into the clear, early morning sun of July, I noticed a young married couple with a small boy ahead of me. The boy had pointed to my "Hands Off Washington" bumper sticker, and the mother was explaining something to him.

"Damn," I thought to myself, "another confrontation coming up!" Images of the previous Saturday confrontations at the Ferry Terminal came to mind. A very sour-faced, heavyset woman screaming at me, "Get away from my van, you perverted faggot! Get away!" Then, her son (about the same age as the boy that was ahead of me now) started emulating his mother's hate, "Yeah, you get away from our car!"

I approached my jeep and overheard some of the conversation. "The citizens of the State of Washington didn't buy into their lies and deceptions...", the mother was carefully explaining to her son, "We are very fortunate to live in a liberal state where people are concerned about discrimination."

The sun felt warmer, seemed brighter, and the surroundings started to sparkle as the tears formed.

*Initiative Update: At one time this year, our community was facing the possiblity of statewide anti-gay initiatives in ten U.S. states come November. By July's ballot-filing deadlines, only Oregon and Idaho collected enough signatures to qualify for November's ballots, and in September an Oregon Appeals Court may uphold a lower court ruling that the measure is unconstitutional. Anti-gay forces promise "they'll be back next year."* ▼

## NAMBLA and Jesse's Busy Summer (continued)

surprise," continued the aide, "Stay tuned."

Senator Helms was busy this summer, successfully attaching anti-gay amendments to a series of bills in the U.S. Senate.

While it was rumored that Helms would attach an anti-gay adoption clause to the D.C. Appropriation Bill, this move never materialized. Nonetheless, GLPCI prepared a position statement on the issue (titled "In the Best Interests of the Child") which was used by the Human Rights Campaign Fund, the National Lesbian and Gay Task Force, and the Log Cabin Republicans in their lobbying efforts. GLPCI also strategized with People for the American Way, the American Civil Liberties Union, and Georgetown University Law Professor Chai Feldblum about possible language to counter Helms' expected moves.

Helms (with Sen. Bob Smith, R-NH) did attach an amendment to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act which would ban all federal funds from public schools which accept homosexuality as a "positive alternative lifestyle." During the debate, *Heather has Two Mommies* was part of a group of publications described as "disgusting, obscene material that's laid out before school children in this country every day."

The House attached similar anti-gay wording to its version of this bill back in March. Other amendments, which sought to render ineffective the anti-gay provisions, were passed by both bodies. The final version will be worked out in a joint committee.

A group of activists in Boston confronted Representative Joseph P. Kennedy II (D-Brighton) after learning of his support for the House's anti-gay amendment. His attempts at "damage control" backfired when he told the group, which included three lesbian parents, one holding her 18-month-old daughter on her lap, that lesbians who create families outside of heterosexual marriage are "morally wrong" and "weird." *How did your elected officials vote on these issues?* ▼

## My First Vote — by Simon Nkoli

### April's historic election in South Africa (from *Exit*)

People were quite restless. I went to bed early because I wanted to be quite sober. I had dreams about being late. I got up at 5 a.m. But I was torn between listening to the news on radio and TV and getting out to vote. I was out in the queue, but then I decided I wanted to listen to the news. I heard the 7 a.m. news and then I heard the bomb at the airport [a right-wing attempt at intimidation]. By 7:30 that was on the radio as well.

At 8:30 I was out in the queue again. It was long, about two kilometers. I tried twice to borrow a baby to get up to the front of the queue. It was a nice game. For me it was very difficult since everyone knows I'm gay. But the third time I rented a baby for two rand [75 cents]. It was exciting!

*Simon Nkoli, a 36-year-old gay political activist and AIDS educator in South Africa, has been called "the gay Mandela." Simon also tells us he is the adoptive father of a 17-year-old girl.* ▼

## Bibliography of Books for Our Children

Updated for Spring 1994 — an annotated bibliography of over 85 picture books for children (birth to age 11) of gay and lesbian parents ($2.50). Also available ($5) — "Bibliography on Gays and Lesbians and Their Families." Write: GLPCI, Box 50360, Washington, DC 20091, U.S.A. ▼


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# "Keeping Connected" — Interview (continued from page 1)

What happens when lesbian or gay couples break up and there are children involved?

*Here are some highlights from our wide ranging two-hour discussion:*

MICHELLE: When my relationship ended and I could no longer see my kids, there were no services or support. Some people were very happy to say "get yourself a lawyer." In some instances that might be very appropriate, but that's not the only thing going on. The pain of loss is enormous. It's not describable, it's not liveable, it's not nothing. It never ends — it changes and it mutates, but it doesn't end. When I started to laugh that was a major breakthrough. But there's a lot of guilt associated with being able to laugh and having fun.

ELAINE: I know, how can I really be a mother if I've lost my children and I can still laugh?

LINDA: Our losses were not considered losses by most of the people in our lives. We were totally unvalidated until we came together as a group and said, "Yes, it's a terrible loss to lose your child."

ELAINE: When you're together with your family and the kid is there next to you, you can somehow establish that you are the kid's mother. But if you don't ever see your kid — "well, you didn't give birth to him." For my birthday, my current lover got me a mug that says "Mom." She said, "Just because you don't see him doesn't mean you're not a mom." I felt so supported. I need that support. Most people don't even ask or they're afraid to ask. I'm not letting go of it. I want to remember, and I want other people to remember too.

TERRI: I remember going to a lesbian mother's group in my neighborhood. I have a biological child who lives with me, and two stepchildren who don't. At the first meeting, I didn't know how to introduce myself — Do I have one child? Do I have three? Am I a mother and a former step-mother? And I just wanted to be light and upbeat at the beginning of a group and say "Hello!" There was an upending of my sense of who I am, what my life is, what my family looks like. And what does that mean to my child? — who grew up thinking he has two moms, a gay dad, and two stepbrothers. Then there's a wrenching away of his life, his connection.

MICHELLE: Once you've had children, it's not about you anymore. It's not okay to say "I'm protected and you're not and that's the way it goes. The children will just get over it." We spend all our time as parents getting educational toys and reading the right books and teaching non-violence — but this is the ultimate violence. This is ripping away the whole inside of your children. And that you'll do — because you can?

TERRI: It plays itself out in such trivial ways — my son wanted to take two showers yesterday and one this morning. It became clear that he wanted to use up the shampoo, because he wanted to buy *Pert Plus*. And I said, "What's this thing about *Pert Plus*?" And he said, "That's what I always used at Julie's, and there's lots of commercials about it." I thought do I want anything in my house that reminds me of her? — No way! But if it has some meaning for him — some intrinsic meaning about weaving the past and the present — if for him it creates a sense of fullness and connection, I'll live with the *Pert Plus*. And I think this little vignette shows what the real issue is — do we separate from our own anger — our rage, bitterness, feelings, antipathy — and do what is the right thing for the children? It can never be right to sever kids from their sense of history. It can never be right to deprive them of a sense of who they are.

> "I think nobody wants to face that we're really capable of doing this to each other. "

LINDA: There are an estimated 10,000 children that are born into gay and lesbian families. If 50% of our relationships dissolve, that's 5,000 children who might be going through this and have no control over holding on to their two parents.

TERRI: Obviously, I think we can play a big role in prevention.

MICHELLE: I would like to see this as a centerpiece of the things we write about. I don't want to see this as an addendum. This is not an afterthought. This is something you need to think about up front — before you have kids. You need to think about what family means, what parenting means. What is it going to be like now that your single life is over? — because that is what having children means. You may be divorced, you may be single, but now you have responsibilities. You need to and we need to demand that we are able to carry those out.

TERRI: I think it's so much easier for us as lesbians and gay men when the enemy is clear. Look at the Sharon Bottoms case — there it's Grandma taking away our children. Or maybe it's some straight dad. I think that's part of why this issue is so difficult. I think nobody wants to face that we're really capable of doing this to each other. I don't see any sanction or censuring that my ex-lover has received from our community. Maybe at worst she suffers in that a few people who would normally have greeted her warmly with a hug, now kind of nod at her. That's it! That's not much of a price to pay.

We don't have a framework in our culture for saying "THIS IS WRONG." When I was sick once, I

watched a lot of TV talk shows. I saw straight people hysterical about men who walked out the door, about deadbeat dads, and all these things. We write articles and do research studies about the effects of gay parenting compared with straight parenting and we come out pretty okay. But why don't we want to look at the breakdowns? — the breakdowns are not about deficient parenting.

ELAINE: Too many of us have internalized that because we have no rights, therefore we should expect no rights. I found in a lesbian mothers group that everybody said, "This is terrible." They did relate to it. But they said, you've got to let it go. There is nothing you can do.

MICHELLE: You can bet they wouldn't say that to their sister and brother. No way would they say "Joe, you lost. You're getting a divorce. They're her kids. You're just going to have to not see them for the rest of your life."

TERRI: I think this issue can stand alone, but there are other issues that can stand with it. When I think about Tony Kushner's play, *Angels in America*, he's talking about right wing gays who exploit gays, and he's talking about HIV-negative men abandoning their HIV-positive lovers. I think it's time for lesbians to come clean and look at what we do to each other.

I don't have hope that my own situation will improve. But what I do have — and why I don't feel like a victim now — is a sense of empowerment by our giving voice around this issue. We're trying to create a new ethos — a new standard for our community.

Fifteen years ago I wrote a poem about my first lover after we broke up. It's not great poetry, but there is a line that's a metaphor for loving these kids:

*Like your hand tunnelling out "I Love You"*
*On sand too soon whitewashed by the foam*
*Dragging the message out to sea.*
*The message though buried*
*Cannot be denied*
*Deeper in the earth's belly*
*Where nothing can erase*
*Not even time.*

That does it for me. There is nothing she can do to take away from those kids the experience of having known and loved me and been loved by me.

MICHELLE: I think we didn't have that when we started the group. It's quite clear to me now I was a parent, I am a parent, and I'll always be a parent. Those children are part of who I was and who I am. There'll be things that they'll do with their children and their grandchildren — and they probably won't be able to say they got them from me. But I'll always be a part of them.

And every place I go, they go with me. And that's just the way it is.


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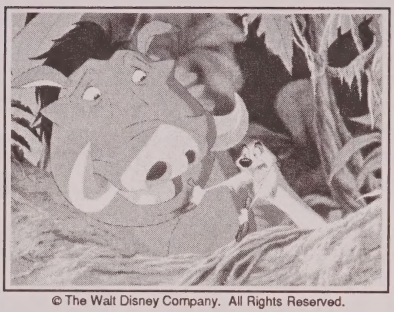
*Our thanks to the members of "Keeping Connected" for sharing their insights. Pseudonyms were used in this interview. To contact "Keeping Connected," write the group c/o Center Kids, The Lesbian and Gay Community Services Center, 208 West 13th Street, New York, NY 10011.* ▼

## *The Lion King*'s Queens



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Timon and Pumbaa. A gregarious meerkat and a flatulent warthog. And Disney's first gay couple, according to Nathan Lane, who provided Timon's voice and much of the comic relief in Disney's animated blockbuster, *The Lion King*. The couple with "No worries" (*Hakuna matata*) act as foster parents to the young lion Simba throughout his formative years. For another on-screen depiction of gay/lesbian parenting, check out *The Adventures of Priscilla: Queen of the Desert*, an Australian comedy about three drag queens on a road trip through the Outback. Screamingly funny, it presents our diversity in a warm and positive light. ▼

## First, the Good News:

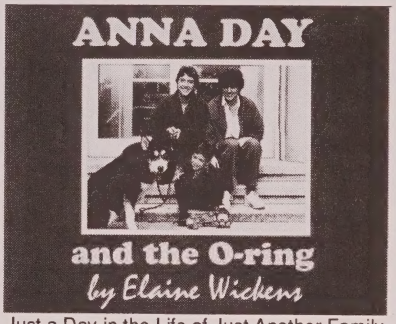
Illinois and Pennsylvania joined the list of U.S. states which have allowed at least one second-parent adoption. In May, two Chicago women saw their family legally recognized. In April, a Philadelphia-area judge produced the first written Pennsylvania decision; adoptions have also been granted in York County.

## Now, the Bad News:

This spring also saw two serious setbacks in the long string of successes. In May, a D.C. judge denied the fourth attempted second-parent adoption in the capital, despite having granted the original single-parent adoption by one of the fathers. In June, the Wisconsin State Supreme Court blocked a second-parent adoption by a vote of 4 to 3. These decisions place further attempts at family recognition in D.C. and Wisconsin on hold while the parents appeal. ▼

Jurisdictions where Second-Parent Adoptions Have been Granted:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Alaska | New Jersey | Vermont* |
| California | New York | Washington |
| District of Columbia | Ohio | |
| Illinois | Oregon | Outside U.S.A.: |
| Massachusetts* | Pennsylvania | England |
| Michigan | Rhode Island | |
| Minnesota | Texas | *Statewide |




Just a Day in the Life of Just Another Family

## What's in a Name?

The Board of Directors of the Gay and Lesbian Parents Coalition International has a challenge for all our members and friends — WE NEED A NEW NAME! If you've ever tried to say "Gee-El-Pee-Cee-Eye" 10 times fast, you'll know why. (And what about Bisexuals?) It's time for something new and catchy, something nineties, something that says who we are — "not P-FLAG." One suggestion: Rainbow Families International.

And for those of you with artistic talent, why not design us a new logo? (Check out the snazzy new COLAGE logo on page 8.) Yes, we'll have prizes for the winners. Send your thoughts, ideas and comments to: GLPCI Name and Logo Contest, P.O. Box 50360, Washington, DC 20091 U.S.A. ▼

## On the Shelves

In Christiansburg, Virginia, *Daddy's Roommate* will stay in the children's section of the regional library, despite parental objection. But in Mercer County, New Jersey, *Daddy* and *Heather has Two Mommies* will stay on adult shelves. Other censorship battlefields: Lane County, OR; Martha's Vineyard, MA; Bladen County, NC; Moss Point, MS; Martinsville, VA; Gwinett County, GA; Cleveland, TN; Collier County, FL; and Prince William County, VA.

When the Radical Right attacks books for our children as "promoting homosexuality," they frequently point to one page in *Daddy's Roommate* which shows two men sleeping in a double bed and another page in *Heather* which explains the process of alternative insemination. Some lesbian and gay parents have criticized these titles as well, preferring books which do not explicitly discuss our families' differences.

Alyson Wonderland has now published one such book, *Anna Day and the O-ring*, a true life mystery illustrated by photos of a real lesbian-headed family. Author Elaine Wickens, a researcher who has written about our families and early childhood education, says she wanted to write a book about "a day in the life of just another family."

### Other titles to look out for:

For Kids: *One Dad, Two Dads, Brown Dad, Blue Dads* (Alyson) and *Tiger Flowers* (Dial)

Non-fiction: *When Husbands Come Out of the Closet* (Haworth) and *Reinventing the Family: The Emerging Story of Lesbian and Gay Parents* (Crown)

For Adults: *Say Uncle* (Dutton), about family values, single parenting, a custody fight, and a conservative U.S. Senator known as "Grandpa."

Check availability at your local lesbian or gay bookstore. ▼

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## News from Around the Globe

Ontario, Canada — On July 9th, the proposal for the most comprehensive domestic-partner law in North America was defeated by the Ontario Parliament. The debate over the equalization of 79 statutes which include the word "spouse" centered on the controversial issue of gay and lesbian adoption. The bill lost despite a last minute move to delete the right of same-sex couples to adopt children. Up to 5,000 angry lesbians and gays took to the streets of Toronto after the measure lost, marching to the Parliament building chanting, "Equal Taxes, Equal Rights." -- *Xtra!*

Sweden — In June, Sweden became the third Scandinavian country to legalize gay and lesbian marriage, but refused to grant gay spouses the rights of adoption, alternative insemination, *in vitro* fertilization, and church weddings. The Netherlands and Finland are expected to be the next countries to grant same-sex unions.

Australia — The New South Wales Law Reform Commission has recommended that lesbians and gays be allowed to adopt. — *The Blade*

Portugal — In July, a gay father was granted custody of his daughter (a first for Portugal). Upon hearing the decision, the mother abducted the girl. — *Expresso*

United Kingdom — In June, a Manchester judge granted a lesbian couple the second-parent adoption of their 22-month-old boy, the first such case in Britain. — *The Washington Blade*

Europe — In the Netherlands, the Clara Wichtmann Institut created a "test case fund" to press for legal recognition of lesbian and gay-headed families. An attempted second parent adoption was unsuccessful, although other strategies continue. In Norway, activists were willing to wait on adoption issues to further the cause of domestic partnership, but are now strategizing to secure these rights as well. — ILGA Conf. workshop

Vatican — On June 22nd, the Catholic Church's official newspaper editorialized: "No child loves being known as the child of an unmarried mother, even less so of a lesbian mother.... When the child becomes an adult, its conscience will rebel." The editorial was in response to a June announcement that an Italian gynecologist had helped a lesbian couple inseminate.

A new activist group in Amsterdam, called "Fax The Pope," suggests you "be creative" if you disagree with the Vatican's latest defense of "Family Values." The Papal Fax is 011 (or your country's code) followed by 396-6988-5178. You can also write Pope John Paul II, The Vatican, Rome, ITALY.

Italy's new right-wing government is expected to introduce legislation banning reproductive health services to lesbians shortly. A similar attempt is underway in Britain by the Conservative government, despite having failed in 1990. — *The Washington Blade*, *Paz y Liberacion*, and *The Advocate*

Virginia — In a dramatic reversal, a Virginia appeals court ruled Tuesday, June 21st that Tyler Doustou be returned to his lesbian mother, Sharon Bottoms, and chastised a lower court for declaring Bottoms unfit to raise her son. An ACLU attorney representing Bottoms said that the decision marked an instant transformation in Virginia, changing the state's reputation from one of the least favorable to gay parents to one of the more progressive. Unfortunately, Bottoms' mother, who has custody of Tyler, will appeal the latest decision, and court rules allow her to keep the child while the appeal is pending — a process which could continue for years.

Utah — In July a non-biological mother filed for visitation rights to her three-year-old son conceived by the alternative insemination of her ex-partner of eight years. Four U.S. states have already ruled that a non-biological parent in a lesbian relationship has no parental rights. — *The New York Native*

Maryland — Montgomery County activists successfully lobbied to repeal the ten-year-old Hanna Amendment to the county's human rights ordinance. The amendment allowed employers to refuse to hire gays, lesbians, and bisexuals for jobs involving children.

In Carroll County, Robert Mehl, a separated gay father with three young children has been denied all visitation rights. The ruling is particularly troubling because no one asked the judge to restrict Mehl's contact with his children. Mehl says his wife demanded that their sexual relationship continue in order for him to see the children. When he refused and visits stopped, Mehl went to court to enforce his parental rights, but instead lost them. Mehl will appeal. — *The Baltimore Alternative* and *The Washington Blade*

Kentucky — The Court of Appeals ruled that the sexual orientation of a divorced parent alone cannot be used to deny visitation with children. But the decision was ordered not to be used as a legal precedent — no reason was given for this determination. — *The New York Native*

Ohio — A state judge has declared that a sperm donor of a lesbian's young son is the boy's legal father, and has allowed a custody suit to continue. Even though Ohio's donor insemination law specifically states that donors may not sue for paternity, the judge ruled that cases of lesbian insemination had not been anticipated when the law was written. — *Mom's Apple Pie*

Oregon — On April 30th, the same day that a widely publicized attempt to make a gay-positive statement failed at the Colorado State Parent-Teachers Conference, the Oregon PTA quietly passed a resolution opposing legislation which suppresses information about family diversity and sexual orientation. The credit for this success goes to Bonnie Tinker of Love Makes a Family, Inc., who drafted, strategized and nurtured this resolution to its acceptance. ▼

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## GLPCI Highlights — What We've Been Doing For YOU

- Helped organize a day-long parenting intensive for the National Lesbian and Gay Health Conference;
- Welcomed new groups for parents bringing our numbers to over 80 member support groups in 7 countries (US, Canada, England, Norway, France, South Africa and Finland);
- Supported the filming of a introductory video to be used to educate teachers and school administrators on issues effecting our families;
- Invited family and parenting activists to a networking "summit" (6/22)
- Provided documentation (and some final language) for the Oregon PTA resolution supporting the free exchange of information about our families (see page 7);
- Distributed a Press Release in support of the failed attempt to equalize spousal rights in Ontario (see page 7);
- Assisted in the development of an anti-hate TV program featuring a GLPCI family for the USA cable network;
- Lobbied the U.S. Congress to oppose the rumored Helms amendment outlawing gay adoption in D.C. (see page 3) ;
- Attended the ILGA Conference, leading a workshop and voting to oust NAMBLA (see p. 1);
- Marched with over 1,000,000 people in New York's historic Stonewall 25 march and heard COLAGE representatives address the crowds from the rally stage in Central Park. ▼

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## A Thousand Thanks!

Hats off to the dynamic conference committee and wonderful volunteers who helped to make the GLPCI 94 conference in White Plains, NY such a rip-snortin' success! Thanks for all your efforts in organizing a heart-warming, educational, friendly, and inspiring weekend. Let's do it again next year!

## Congratulations to GLPCI's New Executive Committee

At our White Plains conference, the member delegates of GLPCI elected the following 4 women and 4 men to lead our Coalition in the coming months:

John Nicoli, Burlington, MA — President
Patricia Barr, Manchester, NH — Executive Vice President
Andre Jacinto, Thousand Oaks, CA — Executive Vice President
Suzanne Upshaw, Houston, TX — Vice President, Administration
Wayne Steinman, Staten Island, NY — Vice President, Outreach
Terrie Duboze, Euclid, OH — Vice President, Support
Jim Fagelson, North Potomac, MD — Vice President, Communications
Diane P. Kerkhoff, Orlando, FL — Vice President, Event Planning

Look for the Fall issue of *Network* in late October.

**NEXT ISSUE DEADLINE: October 1, 1994**

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# "Reducing The Risk" of Child Sexual Abuse in Your Church

A Step-By-Step Guide To Implementing A Prevention Program

**For Workshop Participants**

by James F. Cobble, Jr., D.Min., Ed.D

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# *Reducing the Risk of Child Sexual Abuse in Your Church*

## *A Step-By-Step Guide To Implementing A Prevention Program*

James F. Cobble, Jr., D.Min., Ed.D

## Introduction

This guide provides a ten step approach to launching a program in your church to reduce the risk of child sexual abuse. These steps are not intended to be an exact blueprint that every church should follow. They do however, provide a point of departure that your church can use to create its own program.

### Goals

This guide focuses on achieving four goals.

1. *To make your church a safe place for children.* All other goals are subservient to this one.

2. *To lower your church's legal risk by establishing a program that meets the test of reasonable care.* If your church ever faces a charge of negligence related to a case of child sexual molestation, the outcome of the case will largely depend upon two factors. First, what policies and procedures does your church have regarding the selection and supervision of church workers (both paid and volunteer), and second, to what degree were those policies and procedures followed in the case under consideration. The perception of reasonable care may vary from one individual to another. While no single standard of care exists that can be applied to every situation, that is not to say that no standards exist. The National Child Protection Act of 1993 and the congressional record that accompanies it provide guidance on

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this issue. The resource kit that accompanies this guide attempts to help churches establish a "safe harbor" of reasonable care.

3. *To protect the workers of your church from false allegations of abuse.* A false allegation devastates the accused and his or her family. One's finances, health, and reputation can be destroyed. Civil and criminal convictions can occur even though the individual is innocent. The importance of this goal should not be diminished.

4. *To design a program that meets the above goals while maintaining the integrity of church programs and staffing needs.* Focusing upon child sexual abuse evokes a wide spectrum of emotions and concerns within a church. Adult survivors of such abuse may experience emotional pain and renewed suffering. Church leaders may fear that proposed polices and procedures will negatively impact church programs. Consensus may be hard to achieve concerning screening volunteer church workers. The process of creating and implementing a prevention program is not automatic or completely predictable. By drawing upon the experience of churches who have gone through this process, this guide identifies possible roadblocks that you may encounter, and provides suggestions on reducing and responding to them. What works in one church may not work in another. While every church will experience some problems and tension in responding to the issue of child sexual abuse, a successful program can be established.

## Launching a program takes time

The time frame to complete these steps takes months, not weeks. Program success depends upon the support and understanding of church leaders, church workers, and congregational members. Failure to adequately orient people to the need for a prevention program will undercut, and potentially derail, your efforts. Time taken to build a solid base of support will be rewarded in the end.

## The resource kit

This guide is part of a resource kit. Use it with the following three resources:

- *Reducing the Risk of Child Sexual Abuse.* A 96-page reference book that provides detailed guidance on establishing a risk reduction program. In this guide, the book will be referred to simply as "the book."
- *Reducing the Risk of Child Sexual Abuse Training Manual.* This manual provides detailed lesson plans for various groups within your church. References to this manual will be noted as the *Training Manual.*
- *Reducing the Risk Video.* A two-part video that enlists the support of church leaders, workers, and members to establish a risk reduction program. References to the video will be noted as "the video."

# Step 1: Become Informed

Church leaders often express shock and disbelief that child sexual abuse occurs within local churches. Your first step is to become informed concerning this problem so that you can clearly communicate the need for preventive action to others.

## *ACTION PLAN*

| Concerns | Tasks | Roadblocks | Strategy |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. The problem of child sexual abuse is not well understood within the church.<br><br>2. Many myths and misconceptions exist about this problem.<br><br>3. You must be able to answer questions and reduce fears to establish an effective program. | 1. View video.<br><br>2. Read book.<br><br>3. Obtain local resources (check with social service agencies).<br><br>4. Monitor local papers and news media. | 1. Time.<br><br>2. Apathy | 1. Create a schedule with deadlines to complete each task. |

# Step 2: Show Video Tape to Church Leaders

The video tape, *Reducing the Risk,* is the single most important tool you have to enlist the support of your church leaders to combat this problem. Follow the instructional outline in Chapter 3 of *Reducing the Risk of Child Sexual Abuse Training Manual.*

## *ACTION PLAN*

| Concerns | Tasks | Roadblocks | Strategy |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. To enlist the support of key leaders. | 1. Get viewing the video on the agenda of a leadership meeting.<br><br>2. Prepare a brief presentation using the outline found in Chapter 3 of the *Training Manual.*<br><br>3. Gain approval to establish a prevention program. | 1. The overwhelming view that churches are safe places and that such problems do not occur within churches.<br><br>2. Acceptance of the problem, but a feeling that "our" church is different—no one here could ever do such a thing.<br><br>3. Acceptance of the problem, but a passive response—nothing is ever done.<br><br>4. Resistance to doing anything for fear that volunteer workers will be scared away from serving. | 1. Meet with key opinion leaders and explain why they should see the video.<br><br>2. Don't focus on the specifics of what your church should do. Rather, build a consensus that a prevention program is important.<br><br>3. Place emphasis upon providing a safe place for the children.<br><br>4. Help leaders understand that the liabilities associated with this problem are potentially enormous. |

# Step 3: Form Task Force/ Policy Committee

Once the decision is made to establish a prevention program, you will need to form a committee to establish policies and procedures. Your concern at this step is not to create policies, but to recruit the best possible people to work with you to establish the prevention plan.

## *ACTION PLAN*

| Concerns | Tasks | Roadblocks | Strategy |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. To recruit people who care about reducing the risk of child abuse.<br><br>2 To recruit capable people who can work together to establish effective policies. | 1. Interview potential committee members.<br><br>2. Select members.<br><br>3. Schedule meetings. | 1. Lack of interest.<br><br>2. Few qualified candidates. | 1. Find people who care about this concern or who may have professional experience in dealing with this or related concerns (social workers, teachers, day care workers, doctors, etc.).<br><br>2. Recruit church workers and leaders who work with the church's children and youth.<br><br>3. If few candidates are available, try to enlist the help of one or two governing leaders. Proceed alone if necessary. |

# Step 4: Orient Policy Committee

The first meeting of the committee should be educational. Follow the instructional outline found in Chapter 4 of your *Training Manual.* Group members should understand the nature of this problem and how it affects the church before creating any policies or procedures.

## *ACTION PLAN*

| Concerns | Tasks | Roadblocks | Strategy |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Members must understand the key issues<br><br>2. Members should identify the risks that may be present within the church | 1. Give each member of the committee a copy of the book<br><br>2. Have a group viewing of the video<br><br>3. Conduct a risk analysis of your church's programs | 1. Passive involvement.<br><br>2. Scheduling problems.<br><br>3. Lack of resources. | 1. Follow the instructional outline in Chapter 4 of the *Training Manual.*<br><br>2. Don't be concerned about establishing specific policies at this step. Keep attention focused upon the nature of the risk and the need for prevention.<br><br>3. Assign responsibility to the most committed and knowledgeable members for drafting initial policies that will serve as the focus at the next meeting. Make sure they have a copy of the book. |

# Step 5: Establish Policies

Rather than starting from scratch, your committee will function best if it has a set of proposed polices that it can react to. Several key members of your group should create such a set of proposed policies (Part 2 of the book can provide assistance in achieving this task).

➪ ***Warning!*** Do not create policies that sound good on paper, but which are impossible to perform. Policies should meet the test of reasonable care. That is, given the circumstances, the care provided reflects sound judgment. Failure to follow your own polices may result in negligence on the part of the church if a problem should occur.

## *ACTION PLAN*

| Concerns | Tasks | Roadblocks | Strategy |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. To establish policies that meet the test of reasonable care.<br><br>2. To establish policies that will be carried out.<br><br>3. To establish policies that are appropriate for the level of risk involved. | 1. Create screening procedure.<br><br>2. Create supervision procedures.<br><br>3. Establish reporting procedures.<br><br>4. Establishing procedures to respond to an incident if a report should occur. | 1. Unrealistic policies: too extreme or too vague.<br><br>2. Tunnel vision.<br><br>3. Out-of-touch with church programs and workers' needs and expectations.<br><br>4. Lack of consensus concerning policies. | 1. If possible, obtain sample polices from other churches or organizations that work with children.<br><br>2. Review Chapters 4-8 in the book.<br><br>3. Review Appendices 2-4 in the book.<br><br>4. Have your local social service agency that responds to abuse concerns review your polices.<br><br>5. Solicit the feedback and input of church workers and leaders.<br><br>6. Recognize that several meetings may be required to complete all tasks. Have patience. |

# Step 6: Get Policies Approved

Your church should ratify the policies before implementation occurs. Approval should come from the governing leaders. Also note that if church workers do not agree with your policies, successful implementation is unlikely.

## *ACTION PLAN*

| Concerns | Tasks | Roadblocks | Strategy |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. The program becomes legitimized only after church leaders approve it.<br><br>2. The program becomes possible only if those who must implement it accept it. | 1. Submit tentative policies to church leaders.<br><br>2. Get feedback and support from ministry leaders and those responsible for carrying out the proposed policies. | 1. Leaders may not be sufficiently oriented to the problem.<br><br>2. Fears may exist that the policies may hurt the recruitment of volunteer workers. | 1. Keep leaders informed during the policy formation process.<br><br>2. Reduce fears associated with the implementation process. For example, once volunteer workers understand the importance of the program, our experience indicates they are supportive of church policies to protect children and express pride that their church has taken leadership to address an important societal problem. |

# Step 7: Educate Church Members

Launching a successful program depends upon building and maintaining the support of church members. Follow the suggestions found in Chapter 9 of the book and Chapter 7 of the *Training Manual.*

## *ACTION PLAN*

| Concerns | Tasks | Roadblocks | Strategy |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Congregational support is linked to the degree of understanding present among church members of the importance and need for a prevention program.<br><br>2. To create a culture within the church that will sustain the program.<br><br>3. To reduce fears connected to establishing a program. | 1. Provide literature, and prepare articles and notices for your church bulletin and newsletter.<br><br>2. Designate a special emphasis day.<br><br>3. Speak to adult Sunday School classes.<br><br>4. Incorporate information into a membership orientation program.<br><br>5. Promote special educational events.<br><br>6. Make pulpit announcements. | 1. Lack of organization..<br><br>2. Poor communication. | 1. Establish an orientation committee to help organize your educational strategy.<br><br>2. Develop a multifaceted communication approach that uses a variety of mediums.<br><br>3. Consider contacting the local media to cover your church's attempt to address this problem. Such coverage will create a positive image of your church and encourage the support of all church members.<br><br>4. Review Chapter 10 of the book. |

# Step 8: Train and Screen Workers

The time has arrived to screen church workers. All designated workers should participate regardless of how long they have attended the church. The screening process should be introduced as part of a worker training program. Follow the instructional guidelines found in Chapters 5 and 6 of the *Training Manual.*

## *ACTION PLAN*

| Concerns | Tasks | Roadblocks | Strategy |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. To screen out child molesters.<br><br>2. To use informed workers that provide a safe environment for children.<br><br>3. To lower legal risk.<br><br>4. To comply with any applicable legal requirements (some states require certain screening procedures for providers of child care). | 1. To screen all designated workers, both paid and volunteer.<br><br>2. To organize and conduct a worker's training event.<br><br>3. To ensure that all workers understand polices and procedures. | 1. Lack of organizational follow-through.<br><br>2. Inconsistency in training and screening.<br><br>3. Inadequate orientation of workers. | 1. By this time, workers should be well aware of the church's concern to reduce the risk of child abuse. A personal letter should be sent to each worker inviting him or her to attend the training session. If desired, the screening form can be included with the letter. Otherwise, the form can be distributed at the training event.<br><br>2. A deadline should be established for workers to return the screening form.<br><br>3. The focus of the training should always place the welfare and safety of the children above other concerns. That does not mean, however, that other concerns are unimportant. |

# Step 9: Supervise Workers

While screening helps to ward off molesters who intentionally seek out victims, supervision provides a second vital line of defense against more circumstantial or impulse acts of molestation. Screening alone is insufficient to establish an effective prevention program. Supervision must also occur.

## *ACTION PLAN*

| Concerns | Tasks | Roadblocks | Strategy |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. To reduce the risk of situational molestation.<br><br>2. To provide accountability for church workers.<br><br>3. To reduce legal risk. | 1. To monitor activities involving children to ensure that policies are followed.<br><br>2. To provide feedback to workers and children when problems occur. | 1. Insufficient workers and supervisors.<br><br>2. Uninformed workers.<br><br>3. Exceptions to the rule (unable to say no).<br><br>4. Lack of assertive leadership. | 1. All ministry leaders must understand their supervisory roles. Follow the instructional outline in Chapter 5 of the *Training Manual.*<br><br>2. Use role playing in training supervisors.<br><br>3. Assign specific responsibilities for supervision at all church activities involving children and youth.<br><br>4. Periodically meet with supervisors to review and discuss their needs and concerns. |

# Step 10: Monitor Program

To be successful, a prevention program must be sustained over time. This is only possible if the program is reviewed periodically and modified to meet changing needs and circumstances. All of the attention and effort that goes into establishing a program can become quickly dissipated. Without proper attention and follow-up, a program can disintegrate.

## *ACTION PLAN*

| Concerns | Tasks | Roadblocks | Strategy |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. To maintain program viability over time.<br><br>2. To adapt to changing needs and circumstances.<br><br>3. To make sure that new workers understand policies and procedures. | 1. To establish set dates for program evaluation.<br><br>2. To check that workers are completing screening forms.<br><br>3. To solicit feedback from workers with supervisory responsibilities.<br><br>4. To monitor legal developments.<br><br>5. To make necessary changes in policies and procedures. | 1. Lack of structure or internal organization<br><br>2. Lack of leadership.<br><br>3. Desensitized to the magnitude of the problem.<br><br>4. Lack of accurate or up-to-date information. | 1. To establish an ongoing safety committee who will monitor the prevention program along with other church risk management needs.<br><br>2. To require an annual report to the church governing leaders of the status and viability of the program.<br><br>3. To monitor the bimonthly newsletter *Church Law & Tax Report* for any legal developments. |

# Conclusion

These ten steps provide a basic blueprint that you can follow in establishing a plan to reduce the risk of child sexual abuse in your church. Every congregation, though, is unique. What works well in one may not in another. Adapt the basic strategy found above to meet the needs of your church. As you implement a plan you are providing protection for your church's children, staff, volunteer workers, and members. You are undertaking an important and valuable task.

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